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HER WEEK'S AMUSEMENT

By
THE AUTHOR OF
'MOLLY BAWN'



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Edith Bibby

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BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"PHYLLIS," "MOLLY BAWN," "ROSSMOYNE,"

ETC., ETC.

Margaret

LONDON: WARD & DOWNEY,

12 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1886.

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COLSTON AND COMPANY, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

HER WEEK'S AMUSEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

WE have barely crossed the threshold of the Victoria Hotel when we meet her. She comes towards us across the hall with the prettiest air of surprise imaginable and the daintiest smile.

"Why, it is *you*, Muriel!" says my wife, going up to her and embracing her warmly. "What a comfort to meet a friend the very first thing!"

"For me it will be the very last thing," returns Miss Kingsley. "Just to think of it! We have been here only two days, and now auntie has had a telegram recalling her to England. This very evening we must go, and we have seen nothing—*nothing!* Isn't it cruel? Of course I must go with her. I dropped a little tiny hint about staying here and finishing my visit without her, but—" here she pauses, laughs, and throws up her hands and eyes with a quaint assumption of the acutest horror,—"she was all *that way*," she says, and laughs again.

There is something infectious in her laughter; we both join in it, though, if we were subjected to a cross-examination, we could not perhaps say why. Surely, as we look at her, we know in our souls her aunt is right.

"This lovely Killarney," she goes on, in

her slow, sweet fashion, "I have seen only two or three bits of it, but it seems all like a tender dream. And now it will be more a dream than ever, as we must leave to-night. And now, too, when you and — " a swift glance at me, and a swifter smile, "have just come."

At this piteous speech, Carrie, who is governed by an impulsive genius, turns to me.

"Why couldn't she stay with us, George?" she says, with radiant thoughtlessness, as if the care of a handsome young woman, and an Irish one to boot, involved no responsibility whatsoever. "It seems such a shame that she should go without seeing anything, and it would be so nice for us, and—"

"It certainly would be very nice for *us*," I remark, but with caution. "Perhaps, however, Miss Kingsley—"

"Oh! if you only *would* let me stay with you!" interrupts that young lady, clasping her hands. "I mean," with a graceful droop into melancholy again, "if you are sure I should not be—in the *way*, I mean."

"In the way? Nonsense! Why, we are quite old married people now, and tired to death of each other. Aren't we, George?" says Carrie, with the clearest laugh.

We are *not* old married people, and I could have said so; but, as I am plainly expected to join in this laugh, I do so with as good a grace as possible.

"Then it is settled?" says Carrie.

"Oh, yes! settled," says Miss Kingsley, beaming upon me.

It *is*. That very night, at dinner, she sits, auntless, beside Carrie, at the *table d'hôte*, and makes herself equally agreeable, in her

gentle way, to me, to Carrie, and to two young men who have got as close to her as circumstances will permit. One, indeed, has secured (no doubt by bribery) the seat on her right hand—a victory that, I can see, awakes in the breast of the other wild but smothered sentiments of revenge and hatred. She seems to be the centre of attraction to all around, and raises many unholy expressions on the lips of her maiden sisters, whose charms fade before hers. The very waiter (who is as like a bull-terrier as humanity will allow) is obsequious in his attentions, hangs over her with tender inquiries about hock or champagne, and appears cut to the heart when she refuses to partake of any savoury dish he brings her.

She seems to me to be saying little, very little, and that of no importance at all,

such as the small amount of scenery she has as yet seen, and so on. She babbles of Torc, the Lower Lake, the sunset on the previous evening—all in no very exalted style, that I can see, yet those two young men hang upon her lips as though pearls were dropping from them. She is kind to them, too, but in a mild, absent fashion that seems to whet their admiration; and if now and then she does permit her eyes to be sweeter than her tongue, I cannot be sure it is not unconsciously she does it.

"She is the very dearest girl!" says Carrie to me, as we close our doors upon the world that night. "Quite the nicest I know. She never *drags*, does she? I am so glad you thought of asking her to stay on with us here."

I thought! *I* asked! As I have never yet

disputed a question with Carrie, I don't feel up to beginning it now, yet a mild protest I venture.

"I had a ridiculous idea that it was you who asked her," I say, with a lenient smile at my own absurd mistake.

"Was it? Well, it is all the same," says she airily, "and I'm sure it was the most fortunate thing I did ask her, poor dear child!"

"I only hope you won't live to repent it," mutter I moodily.

"Why should I do that?" demands she briskly.

There is a—a *liveliness* about Carrie at times that takes one along with it.

"Oh, I don't know," I say, with hesitation. "Those young men at dinner, for example —they seem as if they could not live out

of her sight. If they can't, you know, they must live *in* it. I wonder if there are many more of them?"

"They seemed nice young men," says Carrie, with an evasion I cannot fail to notice. "One is a Mr Brooke—a nephew of Sir Archibald's. You remember him in Scotland, don't you, darling, and how kind he was to us? The other is an engineer—a Mr— I really forget the name, but he spoke of the Wyatts. And of course, George, a pretty girl must expect to be noticed. She is pretty, isn't she?"

"I have seen uglier girls, certainly," I acknowledge, with a carefulness that does me credit. As I have said, we are still a young married couple; sufficient time has not yet gone by since our wedding-day to enable us with decency to hate each other.

I still think Carrie's eyes very pretty, and her laugh full of music. What she still thinks about me I know not—

> "For half so boldëly can there no man
> Swearen and lien as a woman can."

The remembrance, too, of early days is still so fresh upon me, that instinctively I pause before openly expressing pleasure in the charms of any woman whose name is not Carrie Desmond. Though it must be confessed that Carrie Desmond, long ere this, has so far forgotten her duty to me as to speak with unblushing effrontery and undisguised admiration of the hair, or it may be the shirt collar, or the languid droop of the moustache of many a passing acquaintance. Let all this be, however; never, unless she reads these lines, will she know

of the mad cravings to grapple with the owners of those unutterable collars and moustaches that have at odd moments seized me.

"I daresay we sha'n't see much of those men," says Carrie consolingly, after a short meditation. "No doubt they have formed plans of their own by this time."

"No doubt," reply I, with grim disbelief.

And, as usual, I am right. In the morning, it does not surprise me to find Mr Brooke and the Wyatts' friend (who, I discover, calls himself by the distinguished name of Jones) overpowering in their attentions to me. They converse enthusiastically on the charms of the lakes and mountains, though it would be palpable to a year-old infant that their knowledge of them is derived from a tourist's guide; and they hint broadly at

a desire to become acquainted with my plans for the growing day.

I am not even surprised at myself, when presently I give them both an invitation to accompany us to wherever the gods and the boatmen may carry us after breakfast. I give the invitation as impulsively as Carrie might, and anything like the attention and friendly care those young men display toward me during that meal, I am bound to say I never before experienced.

It is a grand morning, bathed in sunshine. Miss Kingsley, tripping downstairs ready for our excursion, in an irreproachable costume, runs as nearly as possible into the arms of two attendant swains.

"Isn't it a good thing I didn't go back with auntie?" she says, turning her limpid blue eyes not on them but on me, where-

upon I can see that they both, in spite of their outward seeming, curse me inwardly. "Dear Mr Desmond, what a day it is! You have brought the sunshine with you."

I begin to fear I shall be assassinated, when Carrie providentially makes her appearance.

"I haven't kept you waiting, have I?" says she to Mr Brooke, whereupon he is compelled to remove his baleful glance from me and conjure up a sickly semblance of a smile.

"You will find the boat awaiting you below, sir," says the manager, coming forward with a courteous rubbing of his hands, and, with a salutation to him, we all emerge into the open air, and stroll down to the step.

Whoever brought the sunshine, it is cer-

tainly with us. It lies upon the unruffled lake in a pale splendour, and touches the trees in the island to a lighter shade, and falls upon Tomies, that fairest of mountains, making its heather golden here and there.

"Some time too hot the eye of heaven shines," but not this day. It seems to suit the soft grandeur of the scene as we glide across the Lower Lake, past Lamb Island and the smaller Heron Isle, from which rise up to greet us as we pass a screaming cloud of wild birds—ducks, divers, and teal.

It is a day to dwarf all mean and angry thoughts, as I believe. I am too trustful. Soon it becomes known to me that ill-suppressed wrath and a raging jealousy have shipped with us. Mr Jones has obtained

the seat of honour next Miss Kingsley. Mr Brookes, therefore (though comfortably stowed away close to *me*), plainly considers himself out in the cold, and miserably ill-used. Now, as Mr Brooke had been the one to sit beside her at dinner last night, it occurs to me that this day's arrangement is only reasonable. Evidently it does not so occur to Mr Brooke. He wants everything! He glowers at me, and speaks in monosyllables to Carrie, who is too delighted, however, with the scenery, to take any notice of his ill humour.

"I thought you wanted to row, Jones?" he says at length, with a ghastly attempt at friendliness (we have two boatmen with us, but before starting Mr Jones had unfortunately said something to us about his rowing at Cambridge). "I'm sure you have

given us to understand that you are a crack oarsman."

"I think a man never looks so well as when he is rowing," says Miss Kingsley, sweetly. This diplomatic speech is loaded with honey. It fills Brooke with the ecstatic belief that she wants to be rid of Jones, and fills Jones with the joyful hope of being able to show himself off to her presently in his best colours. "But you must not stir yet, Mr Jones," she says; "wait until one of the men shows some sign of fatigue."

"Oh, look at that!" exclaims Carrie suddenly.

That, is Ross Castle. There it is on our left, stately, ivy-clad, grand with the memories of many centuries.

"The O'Donoghue's Castle, ma'am," says

one of the boatmen, whose name we discover later to be James Matthews. "He had this castle, ma'am, whin the Kinmares was unheard of. Fegs, 'tis very handsome intirely. An' The O'Donoghue himself will come to see it agin now an' thin, though the grass is green over him for many a hundherd year. Ye wouldn't believe it now, ma'am, would ye?" with a roguish glance at her, "but every sivin years he'll come to see the ould home, an' take a ride across the lake!"

"A *ride!*" says Carrie, who is an unblushing hypocrite, and pretends always a belief in every legend told her, no matter how shadowy.

"Iss, ma'am. 'Twasn't much of a lake it was thin, in The O'Donoghue's time, but dhry land, and a fine huntin'-ground for him. I

know an ould man, ma'am, that saw him an' his followers tearin' across it, hounds an' all, one night last October, whin the moon was up; an' he tould me ye could see through the ribs of ivery one o' thim, hounds an' horses an' hunthers an' all. Look! there's his pigeon-house, ma'am," pointing to a rock rising out of the lake, dented here and there, and hollowed out and turned into little caves and caverns — "all by de action of de wather, ma'am," says James, who plainly regards this as a very ornate speech, as he repeats it on every possible occasion.

He has rowed us in, rather close to the castle, so that we may admire more nearly its wonderfully preserved walls, and see the old women standing on the landing-place, with their baskets filled with pipes, and little

pigs, and gipsy-pots, all made of bog-oak and arbutuswood. And then we row away again, —past the grey stones in the lake that are supposed to represent O'Donoghue's horse, that wakes with his ghostly master every seven years to hunt o'er hill and dale, and past the stony point they call his library,—and so toward "fair Innisfallen" Isle.

"An' there is The O'Donoghue's Prison, ma'am," says James, who will take no notice of any one but Carrie, being blind even to Miss Kingsley's charms—"there on your right," pointing to a huge, square, massive rock that rises from the middle of the lake, crowned by little or no herbage. "He used to keep souldiers at the castle, ma'am, and whin one o' them offended him he'd have him sint over there. Twinty-four hours he'd leave 'em, on bread an' wather. Very little

bread, ma'am, but"—with another roguish twinkle of his Irish eyes—"*plinty* o' wather, as ye may see."

We pass the prison, which looks anything but gloomy in the broad, glad sunshine, and presently come to the small stony landing-place at Innisfallen. The signal for us to get on shore creates instant confusion in the minds of two of us, and a struggle for first place on land, all with the view to obtaining possession of a pretty gloved hand for the space of one miserable second. To look at Jones and Brooke, you might imagine there is but one pretty hand in all the world, and that Miss Kingsley is the proud possessor of it. I should be sorry to affirm positively that Jones jostled Brooke purposely with a view to upsetting him into the smiling lake, or that Brooke put his foot before Jones in the

fond hope that it might bring him to an ignominious end; but certainly there is a suppressed scuffle somewhere, and more haste than elegance in the way they scramble at last on shore.

And, after all, for nought! Miss Kingsley, as though oblivious of the four hands tremblingly extended to her, springs past them, and, tucking her arm confidentially within Carrie's, goes straight for the old ruins that stand scattered over this sacred isle.

Behind come I and the two disappointed youths. They cling to me, rather, I cannot help acknowledging to myself, as a means to escape from each other than from any overweening affection for my society, though I am just now in one of the gayest of my many charming moods.

Carrie and Miss Kingsley are wandering

through the ruins of the old abbey, in at one quaint archway and out at another, silent wrapped in contemplation of its lonely beauty. Somehow we seem very far from man and the din of the "madding crowd" just now, lost in a bygone century and a vain attempt to rebuild and repeople the sad, crumbling mass of grey stones about us. The trees around have grown so tall as to overshadow the decaying walls; one young oak is standing, strong and vigorous, in the very centre of a roofless cell—a touch of insolent life amidst all this pathetic death and decay. It has outgrown the surrounding walls, and somehow gives us a greater knowledge of the passage of time since first those walls became roofless than even the sorrowful ivy that clings to them, or the shattered curves and arches.

"How melancholy it is!" says Carrie, with a pensive sigh.

"One can almost fancy the grey-hooded friars stealing in and out here on moonlit nights," says Miss Kingsley, in a pretty awe-struck tone. "See! out of that wee ivied door there, and round under that fallen arch, and then in here again—that is how they would steal along, with their cowls close drawn, telling their ghostly beads the while. It seems all so natural, standing as we do now. And *there*, one might imagine a pale young monk—like the one in Doré's 'Day-dream'—lost in a cruel reverie, or sunk in prayer for the sins of all mankind."

"It is a beautiful religion," says Carrie softly, alluding to Romanism.

She sighs again, and puts on her most pious expression, the one she used to keep expressly

for St Matthias's when we were in town. She is (or at least fondly believes herself to be) an advanced Ritualist, and dotes openly upon lighted tapers and little boys in nightgowns.

"A picturesque religion, but a mass of the very grossest superstition," says Mr Brooke suddenly, in a tone that seems to come from his boots, it is so deep and saturnine.

Unfortunately, he is unaware of Carrie's High-Church tendencies, and is driven to this remark because all things at this moment are hateful to him. Carrie glares at him in melancholy scorn, and I begin to feel we are standing upon the brink of a fiery theological discussion, when Miss Kingsley's clear voice breaks the threatening silence.

"Oh Mr Brooke," she says, raising rapt, reproachful eyes to his, "if you must *think*

such heresies, at least do not say them *here!* I am *so* sorry for you! I hope"—pitifully —"time will show you the beauty of many things to which you are now blind; but until then, do not speak as you did just now—not here. I cannot bear it, indeed!"

Her appealing wail dies away into silence. She places her hand once more on Carrie's arm, as if in need of support. She is evidently suffering. I am deeply impressed. The unhappy young man is crushed!

Downfall of Brooke! ascent of Jones!

("It is Jones," think I.)

"No, no; certainly superstition is the wrong word," says that hero, coming confidently to the front, cheered by his rival's fall. "It is a religion full of grace and poetry, an ideal creed, fit only for those whose souls are fired with the pure sense of

faith." He pauses, and draws his hand in a languid fashion across his brow. I am much taken with his style, and stand in eager expectation of what is to come next. I don't understand him in the least, but I have intellect enough to know that that is one of his chiefest charms. "There is," he goes on, "a concentration of the beautiful, a refinement of the culture of olden days, an intensity—that er—"

An anguished exclamation checks him.

"Oh, *please* don't!" says Miss Kingsley, with a visible shudder, and tears in her voice. "It doesn't suit this place *at all;* it quite vulgarises it. Do not destroy the relief we are enjoying in having got away for once from the æsthetic jargon and forced sentiment of the day to something that we can feel is *real*—like this."

Ascent of Brooke! dismal downfall of Jones!

("It is *not* Jones," think I.)

"To the boat!" I cry cheerily, feeling much for these two young men.

But Carrie and her friend will not be satisfied until they have inspected every hole and corner of the island, and sat under the largest holly in Europe, popularly supposed to be flourishing on Innisfallen, and wandered through the combination of ash, holly, hawthorn, and ivy, all growing so closely together as to appear born of one parent, while in silence, I and the two stricken ones follow them, sitting when they sit, and rising when they rise, with a submission that might melt a block of granite. But what granite is as hard as the heart of a good woman?

Then again out upon the lake, with the oarsmen pulling steadily, and our souls filling with the sweetness of the scene. Again we get a view of Ross Castle, and, far behind it, a glimpse of Mangerton, reddening in the sunshine. Down its deep sides is stealing a thin silver thread of water that flows from the Devil's Punch-Bowl, and is now glinting and sparkling beneath Sol's bright rays.

"An' that's the Mouse Island there, forenist ye out, ma'am," says James, as we go past a little oval isle, "where the white mice come from fust of all. They say 'twas the Chinese come down the Kinmare River be moonlight one night, many a long year ago, an' stole thim away from us."

Even this absurd legend is not too much for Carrie. She takes it without a grimace.

"Dear me! how strange!" she says, with-

out so much as a blink of her hypocritical lids. "I wonder what they did with them?"

"Is that Ross Island?" I ask, to save her from going deeper into the mire.

"Yes, sir; 'tis the largest we have, an' 'tis joined to the land by a slip of a bridge. 'Tis three hundred and sixty-five acres—one for ivery day in the year, ma'am," with a smile at Carrie, and an air of determined resistance to anyone who shall attempt to draw his attention from her. "Ross Castle is on it, ma'am; but the new castle is over there, as ye may see, up by the town."

We all turn to take a look at Lord Kenmare's new residence, that rises up from behind its trees, tall and many-turreted, all in the gaudy red brick of Queen Anne's time.

"'Tis for all the world like a factory wid

thim piles o' chimbleys, isn't it now, ma'am?" says James, who appears to me to regard it with disfavour.

"It is, rather," and Carrie laughs.

"He's in England now, isn't he?" ask I, alluding to Lord Kenmare.

"Iss, sir. He got a threatenin' letther, ma'am, wid an illegant death's-head-an'-bloody-bones on it, an' it give him the sack. But"—growing preternaturally grave, not to say indignant, as he notes her surprised glance—"'twas ne'er a Killarney boy that sint *that*, ma'am, but one o' thim divils o' Laguers that won't let the ginthry alone. But sure he might be worse off whativer, for the Queen has given him a new house over there," with an airy jerk of his thumb, that gives us to understand England is just behind Innisfallen, or thereabouts, "an' a splindid coach-an'-four.

An' well she might, fegs, for 'twas the world an' all he thought of her when she come to visit him, twinty-two years ago."

"It was a great honour, his Queen's coming to stay with him," says Carrie, whom Ritualism alone has hitherto kept from turning Home-Ruler. To do her justice, one sensation at a time is sufficient for her.

"Well, no doubt," says James, but with reserve. His manner conveys the idea that perhaps the Queen should have felt honoured by an invitation from Lord Kenmare. "He was very kind to her whativer, ma'am, an' thought a powerful lot of her. He keeps the barge she sailed about on over these very lakes locked up in a house by itself iver since, in honour of her mimory. An' there's the cottage we'll show ye by-an'-by in Glena Bay, in which he gave her a bit to ate, by way

of lunch, one day; for 'tis hungry work, ma'am, as ye'll find, this sight-seein'. Nary one is let into that cottage since, barrin' the caretaker. An' 'tis kept jist as the Queen left it, savin' that now an' thin they add to the grandeur of it, maybe in the hopes she might come agin. But sorra fear; 'tisn't grand enough we are for the likes of her!"

We have crossed the lake by this time, and are skirting along under the shadow of Tomies toward O'Sullivan's famous cascade. Above us on one side rises mass upon mass of tinted foliage, the deep, brilliant green of the arbutus, with its drooping burden of white flowers, catching the wandering gaze before the calmer shades of the dusk reds and sombre russets. There is an ever-varying beauty about Tomies that renders it always new, and each day dearer—a lifting or lowering of fleecy clouds

upon its brows, a sudden rainbow athwart its breast, a play of hurrying sunbeams in its heights and hollows. Who can say where the change lies? Yet every coming morn one wonders at the strangeness of its glories.

Stepping lightly ashore, we climb the rugged path that leads to the cascade. Over and around us are the sighing trees; glistening masses of mossy rocks form a wall of nature's own upon our right; to our left rushes a singing stream. Scarce any ray of sunlight makes its way into this sylvan solitude, where ferns and a tangled wilderness of blackberry and wild rose hold high festival, while through it all trembles a nervous music—the herald, as it were, of some far-off rushing thunder. Then the sound grows louder, and then, all in a moment, we turn a corner and find

ourselves face to face with the tumult of waters.

Over the great black boulders comes the mighty torrent, pale green at first beneath the dancing spray, then faintest yellow as it touches the rocks below in playful fury, and then at last darkest amber as it crashes into the stony hollows far beneath. With a deafening roar it hisses from crag to crag in a mad haste that looks like fiercest anger, until at last it dies away, and sinks exhausted in the arms of the tremulous stream that bears it away to the lake.

"How like a cruel, ungovernable temper it seems!" says Miss Kingsley pensively. "Oh, it should be a warning to us all!" Here I cannot forbear a glance at her. Is our charming moralist uttering merely a pretty sentiment, or is there deeper meaning in her words

—a gentle hint to the belligerents who stand in dogged watchfulness of each other on her either hand? She bears my glance with the greatest fortitude.

"Yes, a warning to us to put aside all petty angers," she says, turning her eyes fully upon mine. Is there now an amused defiance in their soft depths? "I myself have a shocking temper," she says, in dove-like tones. She looks at me again. This time there is distinct laughter within those purple orbs. There is a faint flicker of her eyelashes, and then they fall over the tell-tales within.

The waterfall is filling Carrie with joy. She sees, she hears, nothing but it. She loses herself in it a little, I think, because she slips her hand into mine, with a fine disregard of the chances of being considered still

in love with me that ofttimes oppresses her.

"It is almost *too much*, George, isn't it?" she says, in what is a whisper here, but would be a roar anywhere else. The noise of the descending waters drowns all other sounds. We gaze at it in wondering delight, and mark how the clumps of waving ferns and tender mosses cling as for dear life to the sides of its rocky confines, and bow their meek heads beneath its giant spray.

Impressed by its grandeur, we retrace our steps, and are soon again rowing merrily over the lake toward Glena Bay, where the Queen's cottage stands, and where Carrie had made some kind mention of permitting us to land and appease our appetites.

"How deep the lake seems," says Muriel, pleasantly.

She is leaning over the edge of the boat in a graceful attitude, trailing her slender fingers through the water.

"About here is the deepest part o' the lake, miss," says James, condescending for once to notice her, as Carrie seems wrapped in thought, "here or a trifle lower down. Three hundred an' fifty feet it is in all, miss, as I'm tould—higher than the highest steeple anywheres." Here he notices with joy that Carrie's interest in his conversation is awakened once more, and his handsome Irish eyes kindle as he moves his friendly glance from Muriel to her. "'Twould take ye a fortnight, or maybe three weeks, to git to the bottom of it," he says to Carrie, with a sly laugh, full of a certainty that she will join in it. She does.

"Ah! *that's* the cottage," says Muriel, when

we have passed Darby's Gardens and got well into the beautiful bay of Glena. "What a little thing, but how prettily thatched!"

There is a tiny landing-place, at which we go ashore, and walk up to inspect the rustic but charming resting-place the Earl of Kenmare had arranged for Her Majesty on her *one* visit to Ireland. Had that visit been repeated, and some little love to the warm-hearted people shown, would not much of the bloodshed of late years have been averted? It is too unhappy a question to be pursued. We leave it, then, and go up to the cottage where Her Majesty lunched in '61—"just twinty-two years ago, ma'm," said James, as we left the boat.

We walk all around it, and admire through the shutterless windows the pretty pink-fluted cretonne coverings of the drawing-room walls,

and all the little choice nicknacks that lie about the rooms. There is an air of indescribable loneliness about it, only heightened by the idea that it is lying there, swept and garnished, waiting for an impossible comer. The cretonne we gaze upon is new, a dainty covering for the walls, but unworthy of a Queen. In *her* time they were clothed with pink satin, lined with yellow sarcenet: I quote from James.

Seeing that hunger aggravates all evil feelings, I now suggest luncheon, in a tone that admits of no trifling, and soon a dainty meal is spread for us upon a broad strip of grass. We spread ourselves before it and fall to.

It is an excellent luncheon, and should have worked wonders, but some people are beyond all genial influences. Jones (to his credit be it said) thaws slightly beneath the

bubbles of the champagne, but Brooke remains gloomy to the bitter end. Somehow I lose my faith in Brooke.

And now, too, the sunshine turns unfriendly. It sinks to rise no more. Where has it gone? Perchance behind that huge mournful cloud that now hangs in heavy grandeur over Tomies' devoted head.

"It looks like a squall," I remark casually, whereupon they all gird up their loins, and flee to the boat.

Carrie, who is a person full of energy, is the first to enter it.

"Oh, I *do* hope it won't be much!" says Miss Kingsley, still lingering on the brink. "Do people ever get upset in these lakes?" She asks this nervously, drawing back from the boat, and looking up at Brooke with a hopefulness in his reply that must, I believe,

contain in it some element of tenderness. She moves nearer to him, and lays her hand with a pretty, half-frightened gesture upon his arm. He thrills, and grows twice the man he was, beneath the ecstasy of that light touch.

"Oh, no! no *indeed!*" he says reassuringly. "You must not let yourself be unhappy for even an instant. There is no fear, none: *I* shall be near you." He flushes crimson, and for one ecstatic moment lets his hand fall upon hers as it rests upon his arm. Does he squeeze it? I watch him narrowly, and so does Carrie, but neither of us, when comparing notes, can be sure. "There is no danger at all," he says, his voice trembling with glad agitation.

"You are then prepared to swear that no one was ever drowned in this lake," breaks in Jones, with a sardonic laugh.

"I am at least always prepared to assuage the fears of a lady," returns Brooke severely.

"Even at the expense of truth?" asks Jones, with diabolical persistency.

I can see he is fuming. The sight of those little, fragile fingers clasped round Brooke's arm is more than he can peaceably endure. Somehow I feel for him.

"What has truth got to do with it?" asks Brooke angrily, but uncertainly.

"With your assurance? *nothing*," says Jones. "There were two men drowned not very far from this only last year!"

He gives Muriel a withering but anguished glance, and springs almost rudely past Brooke into the boat.

"Here, give me an oar!" he calls out roughly to one of the boatmen, as though he would

have said "Here, give me your sword to fall upon!"

"Oh, Mr Jones, not *yet!*" cries Muriel, leaning toward him and holding out her hand—that perjured hand! She has forsaken Brooke's support, and now seems to have centred all her hopes of safety upon the blighted Jones. "Not until you have helped me to my seat," she says, quite anxiously. "No, no, Mr Brooke; you do not know so much about these small boats as Mr Jones, and I have often heard they are easily cap—capsized. Is that the word, Mr Jones? If you won't mind holding my fur cape for a moment," with a heavenly glance at Brooke, "I think I will ask Mr Jones to place me safely on that cushion over there. I can trust myself *altogether* to him," with a lovely smile at Jones—thrice-blessed Jones! "Do you know,"

bending forward to give her hand to Jones, and leaving it in his for the beatific time it takes her to slowly finish her sentence, "stepping down into anything always makes me feel giddy, and as though I *must* fall forward into somebody's arms?"

This suggestion, I can see, is too much for Jones; he too grows giddy. Fearing lest he may fall forward into *her* arms, I strike boldly into the conversation, with a view to restoring order.

"Do you ever feel like that, Carrie?" I ask, in a tone that I hope is without latent meaning. But who can bamboozle his wife?

"*Always!*" she says, in a voice that admits of no compromise.

"So glad I am not the only coward in creation," says Miss Kingsley, smiling at Jones, who is now as radiant as a rose in bloom,

and, springing lightly into the boat, she subsides into the seat next me with a sigh of unmistakable relief.

Is that sigh meant for me? I feel I am growing mixed. Is it Jones? is it Brooke? or is it—

"Carrie, you don't look comfortable there: come here, *close* to me," I say aloud, with a sternness that is foreign to my usual sweetness of demeanour.

"No; I think I'll stay here. I can't take my eyes off Tomies," returns Carrie dreamily, basely declining to come to my support.

Whereupon I give myself up for lost. If any further attention is shown me by a certain person, what will *not* be done to me by certain two other persons? "Answers to be posted no later than Saturday, the 15th."

Jones was taking off his coat, and is now rowing with all his might and main.

"If doughty deeds my lady please,"

Miss Kingsley certainly ought to be charmed. He pulls as vigorously as if his life depended upon each stroke, and looks as well as a stout young man *can* look in his shirt sleeves. I fancy there is a grim satisfaction in the gaunt features of Brooke as he gazes at him.

I think I have forgotten to say that one of our youths is tall and slim (Brooke), the other short and stout (Jones), which facts, taking them as a whole, should redound to the credit of neither, as what one loses in height, he gains in breadth, and *vice versa*. This appears to me to equalise all things, but who shall say how it appears to Miss Kingsley?

And, after all, that is the principal thing to them.

To look at them, one would give the palm to Brooke, but I cannot help thinking there is a great deal in Jones besides his "too, too solid flesh.' And, at all events, of one thing I am quite assured—that there is a *very* great deal in Miss Kingsley.

A few drops fall pattering upon our uplifted faces. The sky has grown strangely dark. It is nearly five o'clock, I find by looking at my watch, and a shadow from the coming night already lies on all around. Is it going to rain?

"Divil a sign of rain!" says James, when appealed to anxiously because of certain feathers in hats. "Don't be afeared, ma'am: 'tis only the *paspiration from the hills!*"

Perhaps he is right, or perhaps he has

whistled to the clerk of the weather-office to spare us; but, at all events, the mists disperse, and from behind them comes a weird light, grand, mysterious, that falls on Tomies in a pale brilliancy, and lights up all its vales and summits, and seems to tremble in mid-air. Straight down from heaven itself it comes, to rest lovingly upon the everlasting hills, and soften into calmer outlines the sternness of their rugged grandeur.

Then this too fades, and far, far above us, half resting on the mountain peaks, falls a dense mass of sullen clouds, grey, tinted with a sluggish blue. Straight out from the sky they stand, as though a man might put his hand behind them, and *from* them uprise fantastic towers and turrets that form themselves into ghostly castles, not all unlike the stately ruins that frown upon the Rhine;

whilst in between all these flash gleams of richest crimson, blood-red from the vanishing sun, darting upward through the heavy grey, as it were flames from some wild Inferno.

"How weird! how wonderful!" says Carrie, in a low tone.

We are all silent. The very boatmen rest upon their oars to gaze upon the gorgeous panorama. Then, after a little while, when we have grown almost oppressed by the unearthly beauty of it, the scene changes; the clouds lift and soar again once more heavenward, and Tomies comes out from behind them, purple and yellow and red as before.

A thin thread of smoke curls slowly upward from the centre of the large valley that almost divides it in two.

"Does anyone live on Tomies?" asks Carrie, turning to James.

"Iss, ma'am; one man, a tinant, a kind of caretaker of Herbert of Muckross. He's all be himself there. That's the man, ma'am, can't quarrel wid his neighbours. And, begorra, a fine thing 'tis for him, too," with a grin.

"It didn't save him, anyway," says the other boatman, opening his lips for the first time. "He said a word in court agin one o' the boys" (Leaguers) "for stealin' a bit o' wood over there, an' they fired into his house one night last week, as he sat be his fire."

"Good gracious! they didn't kill him?" asks Carrie, in horror, yet turning her eyes with a desperate hope upon the thin line of smoke.

If he is dead, who lit the fire? This is

an eerie thought, suggestive of ghosts, and therefore full of joy.

"He wasn't kilt out an' out, ma'am, but 'twas a near shave. He had his little gossoon upon his knee, an', fegs, the bullet wint right betwixt him an' the child. They do say the little chap has been a thrifle deaf since. But sure he needn't care, since they left the life in him, glory be—"

"Oh, that wicked Land League!" says Carrie, with startling vehemence. "What misery it has brought upon this wretched country! Hanging is too good for the miscreants that belong to it!"

"Good heavens!" think I, "what rashness, to deliver herself of such sentiments as these in a loud voice in the midst of disaffected Kerry!"

I gently press her toe, after which I catch

her eye, a rather irate eye, so I greatly fear I have hurt her.

"Take a good look at the man that isn't James," I say in a careful whisper. "He is an advanced member of the society you have just been alluding to in tones of mild censure. Follow up your late remarks, and probably you will find yourself in another moment or so buffeting the angry waves."

"I don't see any waves," says Carrie, who is hopelessly unimpressed by my fervid remonstrance. "And as to suppressing my thoughts about that odious League, don't expect it, George; on such a subject I decline to temporise."

"Would you drown us *all*," I say indignantly, "for the sake of your principles?"

"Would you have me be false to my principles?" retorts she, fixing me with a stony gaze.

"I would have you remember that, whatever it may be to you, life is sweet to me, principles or no principles," say I.

"That is too loose a sentiment for me to entertain," returns she, with a scornful tilting of her little nose.

It occurs to me at this moment that I used to think it a pretty nose. *Is* it pretty?

"Well, you can follow up your present wild course instead," say I ominously; "but when presently you find yourself on your downward course to that lowest part of the lake James told you of just now, I dare say you will repent."

"Downward course? Lowest part of the lake? Is it the bottomless pit you are alluding to? Is this a sermon?" asks she flippantly.

Whereupon we both laugh.

"You *are* such a goose!" she says radiantly, and gives me to understand by a faint gesture of her hand that she here relinquishes all faith in ever being able to make much of me.

She goes back to her contemplation of Tomies, and the spot where the murder was not committed.

"After all," she says, smiling at James, "you see that man, though alone on that mountain, *did* manage to quarrel with his neighbour."

James grins back at her in sympathy.

"'Tis hard to know who's yer neighbour, ma'am," says he, shaking his head.

"Why should neighbours quarrel? Why should anyone quarrel?" demands Miss Kingsley pensively, looking at nobody in particular.

Nobody in particular answers her.

"Thrue for ye, miss," says James vaguely, who is always glad to hear his own voice.

"I pity any poor man living up there all by himself," says Carrie, glancing towards Tomies, now looking lonely as the evening descends.

"'O Solitude! where are thy charms?'" say I, being much given to the utterance of unhackneyed quotations.

"Yet solitude has its charms," says Mr Brooke, in a peculiar tone. "It enables one to escape from the world with one's sorrow and nurse it in secret. To be able to hug one's grief in private is a luxury known only to the miserable. Solitude, too," with slow and terrible emphasis, "enables one to escape from the society of those whose presence has

grown to be not only distasteful, but a *curse!*"

A shivering silence. What is going to happen next? What means this fierce young man? Will Jones come to the scratch? Will he pick up the glove? I am pained to see that Carrie looks full of a certain glad excitement. Miss Kingsley trails her fingers through the water, and seems absorbed in a happy abstraction.

"You are right there," says Jones, resting on his oar, the better to glare at his foe. To feel assured that one need never again be offended by the sight of a detested somebody would be a boon sweet enough to render even isolation Paradise. There are *some*," with a deadly glance, "of whom I would gladly see the last."

"For once I can agree with you," says Brooke.

"There is at least *one*," continues Jones, who, I can see, is determined to push matters to a dangerous point. As he says this, it seems as though he edges somewhat in the direction of his adversary.

"There *is* one," retorts Brooke, making as decided a movement towards him.

Will they meet? Is it time to interfere? I sit trembling, in momentary expectation of seeing a mortal struggle between two misguided men, to be finished only by an annihilation of both as complete as that of the Kilkenny cats, when Miss Kingsley's low, clear laughter, full of gentle merriment, falls upon the air.

"Do look at this, Mr Brooke," she says gaily, holding up her fingers to let some of the sparkling waterdrops fall from them. "See what dear little circles they make as they

fall. And isn't the lake cold? Just feel my hand: it might have been in ice instead of this clear water. Will *you* feel it, Mr Jones? It is the strangest thing."

Where does the strangeness lie? And *is* a ripple on a lake a laughable thing? Yet, oh! how I admire that girl at this moment! I back her up with all my might. It is difficult to get up a laugh about nothing, yet I manage it. I even so far martyr myself as to feel the coldness of her soft hand when the others are quite done with it, which isn't for some time. Her little speech is a blessed relief; but for it I might have had to rise and fling myself between two heated enemies. And in an interference of that sort, in a small boat, the peacemaker is the one most likely to get tipped over the side and plunged in the chilly water. Now, by a soft word wrath has

been turned aside, and peace and a treacherous calm once more restored.

Mr Jones is bending to his oar again. Mr Brooke has taken a less aggressive attitude, and is sunk in a reverie that (to look at him) must be composed chiefly of recollections of midnight assassinations and murders in cold blood. Miss Kingsley has returned to the icing of her fingers and a tender contemplation of the scene around. Her eyes are uplifted to the pale-blue sky, her lips are parted. Of what is she thinking? How far have her thoughts flown? or are they still with us?

> "Beneath her eyelids deep
> Love lying, seems asleep—
> Love, swift to wake, to weep,
> To laugh, to gaze."

But *is* Dan Cupid really asleep? or is he

waking in her breast for Jones or Brooke? There is a soft serenity about her face that masks it well and guards her secret, if any lie behind it.

And now the silence of evening has fallen upon us, and shadows from the mountains are darkening all the lake. There is a tremulous stillness in the air, a greyness on the purple hills. Again we pass Innisfallen, now sunk in gloom, and gaze with lingering eyes on the wooded sides of Ross. A flock of wild duck, startled by our approach, flutter angrily from the little bay in which they are preening themselves, and disappear round some shadowy corner. Then silence again, broken only by the monotonous music of the oars. And now we have passed the Mouse Island, on which two lonely corbies sit in solitary grandeur, watching us with motionless interest until

we have gone beyond their vision; and so past the prison of the O'Donoghue and Heron and Lamb Islands; and now the men quicken their stroke, and presently there is a grating sound, and we know we have touched land, and have come to the end of our first day's excursion.

CHAPTER II.

DINNER passes off dully enough, being enlivened by only one small skirmish between our youths. The terrier is its innocent cause. His edible attentions to Miss Kingsley have been accepted by her in such a kindly spirit, and have been rewarded by such a sweet smile, as might have raised feelings of envy in an anchorite.

Perhaps Jones, who is not an anchorite, sees this smile, and grows jealous of it,

even though it is bestowed upon a minion. At all events he forgets the matter then in question and grows irrelevant in his replies to Carrie.

"I wish *I* was a waiter," he says pensively, almost immediately after that lovely smile has been made a present to the terrier.

"On Providence?" asks Brooke, with abominable rudeness and a worse sneer.

Does he mean a waiter on Providence for the impossible gift of Miss Kingsley's hand? Jones flushes angrily and stirs in his seat, and I feel once again that a cruel crisis is imminent, when Carrie comes nobly to the rescue. How quick these women are!

"I do hope we shall have a fine day to-morrow for our expedition to Muckross

Abbey. Don't you, Mr Brooke?" she says, with her most seductive smile, and again a public *exposé* is providentially avoided.

But that smile! it *used* to be mine alone. What the deuce does she mean by now bestowing it upon Brooke?

Shall we ever see the last of these young men? Alas! this is but the beginning of them. What may not happen before we see the end?

There have been few visitors in the hotel besides ourselves during these past two days, so that the drawing-room, as we enter it after dinner, is, comparatively speaking, empty. Need I say we are pursued thither by the smitten ones, who hover round us as though fearful, if once they remove their eyes from their siren,

she may for ever vanish from their view?

She is clad in a gown of clinging Indian muslin, and is looking more than usually lovely. She has a big yellow sash tied round her waist, and there is a pensive expression in her large eyes.

When Mr Brooke asks her, in a tone of dying anxiety, whether she is tired, she says, "N—o— t *very*," with a melancholy languor and a hesitation framed to make him understand that she is in the last stage of exhaustion. Yet just before dinner Carrie had found her in her room in the gayest spirits possible.

"I never saw a girl so full of go, so untirable," said Carrie to me on that occasion.

"But wasn't it all perfect?" says Miss

Kingsley now, with a soft smile of delight. "What a quite too lovely time we have had since this morning. Haven't we, Mr Jones?"

"I hope to-morrow will hold up and be as fine as this day," says Jones, coming eagerly to the front, being only too glad of the chance to do so. "There is nothing so unpleasant as rain."

"Isn't there?" murmurs she, with a sly laugh, and, with a sudden, swift uplifting of the brows, she glances at Brooke, who is now looking in a contrary direction, and then back again to Jones.

It is all the work of a moment, got through in the twinkling of an eye, but it upsets many of my preconceived ideas. *Is* there, *can* there be, an understanding between her and fat Jones? and has she

all this time been holding up the lean and haughty Brooke to ridicule? I feel I am losing myself in a hopeless labyrinth of doubt. Is she calling Brooke "unpleasanter" than the rain? or do I grow fanciful? Jones, at all events, grows radiant. If I have misinterpreted that laughing glance, so has he, and rejoices now exceedingly in the probable discomfiture of his hated rival.

He grows genial, and, sinking into a chair between Carrie and Muriel, enters into an animated conversation with both. Brooke, at a distant table, is "curving a contumelious lip," and pretending to find absorption in a dismal book of views and a heavy-nosed spinster who is telling him some incident about her stay at Wagga-Wagga. In spite of his assumed haughti-

ness of demeanour, I can see that ever and anon he casts a fiery glance at Jones. He is altogether out of the running, as it seems to me, and I am just beginning to be distinctly sorry for him, when something unexpected happens.

Jones, Carrie, and Miss Kingsley are discussing a knotty point, on which, to judge from Jones's excitement, the fate of Europe must surely hang. They have now come to the close of their argument, and Jones has just begun a peroration likely to last far into the middle of the night. It is addressed exclusively to Carrie, as (need I say it?) Miss Kingsley's opinion on this all-important subject has been his.

"Yes, yes," says Muriel, softly clapping her hands; "how well you express my thoughts! Go on, convince Mrs Desmond, whether she

will or no, and let me find her a true convert when I return. I sha'n't be long, but I *must* get a little air, and a smile from that lovely moon."

She glides gracefully away from Carrie's side, when she has said this, to the open window at the lower end of the room, near where Brooke is sitting in direst discontent. She says nothing as she passes him, refrains even from a glance, yet there is something in her attitude as she leans out of the window, a faint but preceptible sweeping aside of her skirts, that brings Brooke to her in a moment.

"What a night!" he says tremulously.

She turns to him with a pretty smile, and draws her skirts even a little more to herself, so letting him into the embrasure of the window, close to her.

"A night to remember," she says, in a low tender tone, and with a little sigh that might mean anything—love of the brilliant moonlight, or love of—

"To remember *for ever!*" returns he, with effusion.

He is right. From where I am sitting I too can see the glories of the scene without—the lake, clothed in moonbeams, the glittering stars, the dark waving of the fir-trees. Across the scintillating waters, straight from Tomies, a pale path of fire is lying, so clear, so brilliantly defined, that one almost believes in the possibility of travelling on it toward that dark, high mountain from whose foot it seems to spring.

Innisfallen, too, stands bathed in the mystic light, while its trees rustle and sway beneath the touch of the meek summer wind

that passes over it. The scent of roses is in all the air, and comes to us through the window, blown in by some passing breeze; a strange mourning cry from some wild bird alone breaks the stillness of the outer world; even the restless wavelets have sunk to slumber.

> "A sense of heavy harmonies
> Grows on the growth of patient night,
> More sweet than shapen music is."

Miss Kingsley, in her white gown, is standing gazing out upon the fairness beyond, with a little rapt, intense expression on her face. But every now and then she lifts her eyes to Brooke's, and murmurs something that we cannot catch, strain our auricular organs as we may. I say we, because I wish to support Jones, to whom now all my sympathy has gone out. From where

we sit we can see the window, the fickle siren, and the detested Brooke. Not a gesture, not a smile, not a glance, is lost on the agonised wooer near me. His argument with Carrie languishes. He makes a wild effort to sustain it, grows first weak, then foolish, and finally loses the thread of his discourse altogether, after which occurs to me the fearsome thought that he is on the verge of frenzied tears.

It occurs also to Carrie. She grows very red, stammers something nobody can understand, and then basely throws him over upon me.

"George, you know *écarté*, don't you?" she says sweetly.

"Yes," return I limply.

"Then you and Mr Jones can have a nice little game. You know *écarté* too, don't

you, Mr Jones?" This she says with her most insinuating air.

"No," returns Jones defiantly; "I do not."

"No! Then why not some other game, and let me join you? Loo is a nice little game," says Carrie cheerfully, placidly ignoring the fact that for the past three weeks she has been striving to impress me with the idea that it is the most iniquitous game going, and one sure to bring the player of it to a place unmentionable.

"I don't know one card from another," says Jones, not to be won.

Plainly, he won't play. Indeed, there is little game in him, as any one might guess, gazing at his lowering countenance. What is to be done with him now? What fresh exertion to be made on his behalf?

At this moment there is a movement in the window. Miss Kingsley leans forward and bends her charming head in our direction.

"Carrie, I think I shall go out to get a last little peep at the moon without the interference of the curtains," she says, swaying those lace appendages gracefully to and fro; "they come in one's way so, And, besides, I think I shall get a better view of—of everything from outside."

"Very good, dear," returns Carrie affectionately, though I know she is inwardly quaking; "but put something round you."

"Yes, something round you—a very wise suggestion. You really *must;* something round—"

Brooke seems to be mumbling all this in a very fever of anxiety as he follows her

from the room, as though wild with fear at the very thought of this exquisite creature catching cold in her beautiful nose.

At the door Miss Kingsley casts a last little smiling glance at Carrie, and then vanishes, Brooke in her train. They are gone; there is no longer an excuse for silence. What on earth is to become of Carrie and me?

I am afraid to look at Jones; so is she. Why doesn't he speak? Is he going to have a fit? I cast at him a cautious glance, and see that he is staring at a huge flower in the carpet, with an expression that should be equal to the withering of half-a-dozen Brussels roses. He looks like one condemned, or one, at all events, who *ought* to be condemned. There is an air of "premeditated crime" about him.

Then suddenly, as though come to some awful resolve, he rises, rushes with mad haste to the door, and disappears—*whither?* and for *what?*

In blank dismay we gaze at each other.

"Hadn't you better follow him, George?" whispers Carrie at length—with great want of consideration, I must say.

"And leave you here alone!" I exclaim. "He may return by some other door. And there was madness in his eye; didn't you notice it?"

"No," says Carrie, "I didn't. But he certainly seemed in a horrible temper. What if he should meet—the other? How would it be then?"

"How is it being *now?*" return I, with strong effect.

"Oh, George, don't speak like that!" says

Carrie, growing a shade paler. "Good gracious! if anything serious *were* to happen between those two misguided young men, think how dreadful it would be for Muriel! She would feel it keenly."

"Not so keenly as Brooke," say I.

"She is a sensitive girl; if she thought she had been the cause of a quarrel between Mr Jones and Mr Brooke, it would hurt her very much."

"Not so much as it would hurt either Jones or Brooke," I persist, seeing her unimpressed by my former hint.

"Oh, George, is this a time for jesting?" murmurs she, with tearful reproach, which shows how a man's most innocent motives may be misconstrued.

I make a mild protest.

"Who is jesting?" I ask, which leads to

a prolonged discussion that, thank goodness, takes her mind off the subject of my pursuit of the infuriated Jones.

Still it seems quite a long time before Muriel enters, *alone*. She comes up to us, and seats herself beside Carrie, calm and gently smiling, as usual.

"Where did you leave Mr Brooke?" asks Carrie presently, with a quaver in her clear tones.

"Outside, on the hall door-steps, with Mr Jones," says Miss Kingsley indifferently. "They seemed to want a little private conversation with each other, so I came away."

"You left them *alone* together?" says Carrie, with a little gasp.

"Yes, dear. I know what men mean by conversation. It is always a cigar, and I

hate the smell of it. I dare say we sha'n't see them again for an hour or so."

Even as she says this the sound of voices, coming from the gravel outside the windows, reaches our ears. They are not pleasant voices; they rise and fall as though in angry dispute, and certainly the rising is greater than the fall. Then they lessen, as though the owners of them are battling their way round a corner, and presently there falls an awful silence. Will there be presently, perchance, a scream?

It seems an intolerable time before the door opens, and Jones once more appears to us in the flesh. But where is Brooke? Has he been foully murdered? Is his corpse now lying beneath an arbutus-tree, or is it floating on the shining lake, with all the stars of heaven, etc., looking down upon it?

We sit in cold, shivering anticipation of what is yet to come.

And he — the culprit, the criminal — what of him? How can he thus face us, with the brazen front of one innured to guilt? What saith the miscreant?

"I never saw such a duffer as Brooke at billiards," he says, with a well-simulated scorn. "A baby could teach him. I was watching him just now, playing with a fellow from Tralee, and really it was pitiable—not a chance for him, and the fellow from Tralee chuckling. It's absurd, a man's trying to play when he doesn't know a cue from a tennis-racket."

Recollections of Montgomery and Lamson cross my mind. How well these hardened criminals dissemble!

"It's extraordinary how some people will

believe in people," goes on Jones. "There's that man from Wiltshire betting like fun on Brooke. I can't bear a fool, so I laid him two to one against Brooke, and I think" —with a short laugh—"he'll find himself a little out in the morning."

"You say Brooke is in the billiard-room?" say I, with artful lightness.

"Oh, yes; he's there, safe enough," says Jones, unmistakable exultation in his tone.

Is the exultation due to the fact that he knows his rival to be lying cold and stark beneath the summer sky? Can depravity further go? "Safe enough" from further interference with his hopes! Is that what he means? How can he sit there looking so blandly cheerful, so fatly triumphant, with no touch of remorse in any feature? The awful

thought that this is not his *first* murder occurs to me and strikes me dumb.

Meantime Carrie is stooping over to me.

"I don't believe a word of his story," she whispers hysterically. "Go and see where poor Mr Brooke really is."

Feeling that an encounter with a dead man must be less productive of harmful results than an encounter with a live one, I rise, though with considerable reluctance, and prepare to set forth in quest of the missing Brooke.

A sharp exclamation from Carrie stays my movements, which are not, perhaps, as full of eager haste as she could have wished. I turn; I see; I'm disgusted!

Yes, here is Brooke! as gaunt, as grave, as pleased with himself as ever. A feeling that I *hate* Brooke grows on me. There is

a sort of meanness in a fellow who leads his friends up to a pitch of weeping over his untimely demise, and then suddenly disappoints them of their grief by reappearing again.

"I won that game after all," he says, in slow, measured tones, casting a malignant glance at Jones. "You've lost your money to that Wiltshire fellow."

This was too much for Carrie, who had been fondly hoping that it was his ghost who had stalked into the room, and not a *bona fide* Brooke. Rising, with some severity she says she is tired, and declares her intention of going to bed forthwith. No one says her nay.

Miss Kingsley, getting up gracefully from her chair, gives her hand to both her admirers, and a divine smile to me. On the

corridor upstairs she kisses Carrie, and vanishes into a pink-and-white cretonne bower.

"I think it will be Mr Brooke," says Carrie to me, with a knowing shake of her small head.

CHAPTER III.

LAST night's stars did not shine so brightly for nothing. They were the heralds of a perfect day. Such a sun! such a blue sky! such singing of birds and perfume of roses.

"Who says Killarney is always behind a cloud?" demands Carrie, with gay contempt, as she springs lightly, and with a terrible want of caution, into the ancient and rickety vehicle that waits to convey us all to Muckross Abbey.

Need I say that in this "all" the belligerents are included?

I had tried my best all the morning to escape them, but in vain. They seemed to be everywhere that I was, and many and various were the devices they employed to outwit each other and render their pursuit of me seemingly the careless accident of the moment. At length I was finally encountered, in the most unexpected (?) way in the world, in a small passage — unfrequented as a rule — where I had erroneously believed myself to be safe from discovery. Here I was run to earth by Jones and Brooke both bearing down upon me from different directions. But for a certain lowness of spirits that just then suddenly took possession of me, I could have laughed aloud at the situation generally. The indignation of

Jones at finding Brooke in this secluded spot was only to be equalled by the disgust of Brooke on beholding Jones. I, the victim, was almost forgotten in the indignation born of that discovery.

They looked so capable of any atrocity that it flashed across my mind how inhuman a thing it would be to leave them at home together. Who could tell what would come of it? Yes, as a Christian man, I felt it my duty to take *one* of them whithersoever I might be going this afternoon. To be the means of separating them would ensure me an approving conscience, and perhaps enable us to enjoy *this* excursion, at all events.

I decided on Jones. Brooke, as it seemed to me, had had his innings last night, and should now give Jones a chance. I did my

best to take Jones aside and proffer him the desired invitation out of earshot of the other, but that other was too many for me. He held to me like a leech, and regarded Jones with such a threatening eye that I quailed beneath the fear that vengeance sure and deadly would follow on my showing favour to one above the other.

I gave in. Metaphorically, I took them by the hand and declared the dearest wish of my life was that they should both accompany me to Muckross. This lie I told without a blush, though, even if I had so far committed myself, I feel sure they would have refused to notice it. They accepted my invitation with effusion. Jones wrung my hand; Brooke, laying his bony fingers affectionately on my shoulder, asked me if I was sure Mrs Desmond would not like some

extra wraps in case of rain. I am vanquished.

Presently we all find ourselves in the extraordinary old fossil they are pleased to call a waggonette, which is, perhaps, a little more like a hearse than anything else, and is, no doubt, an heirloom in the manager's family. It is quite the most amazing conveyance I ever beheld, and strikes one with admiration in that it can shake so much without falling to bits.

The driver is worthy of his vehicle. He too is a family jewel, to judge from his patriarchal appearance. He is full of startling possibilities, and is not the less interesting because he happens to be an enigma to us from first to last. He rejoices in a club-foot, and has had no opportunity afforded him of finding pleasure in a palate.

That luxury Nature has denied him, so that his utterances are fraught with mystery, and are as shrouded in obscurity as any dark sayings of a Delphic oracle. You see, after all, a man can't have everything.

He says "horck" to his horses when he means "go on," and "tock" when he means "stop." There is a delicious vagueness altogether about his conversation that delights Carrie. She is a long time discovering the real interpretation of the remarkable monosyllables just mentioned, but when light dawns upon her, she is much pleased with them, and gives us the impression, in a general way, that they are much superior to the English we less gifted people use.

He is a man, too, of an unnarrowed mind, bound by no petty prejudices. This know-

ledge of him I deduce from the fact that he calls his near horse Bob and Kate indiscriminately, and the off one Paddy and Moll. He has altogether a nature far above the common run, and we immediately strike up a friendship with him, warm and vigorous, and as lasting as that sort of thing always is.

Before starting, there is, of course, a subdued scuffle as to who is to be the blessed person elected to sit next our divinity. It is terminated abruptly but gently by that young lady herself.

"You know all about it, Carrie," she says sweetly, slipping into the seat next her friend, and as near the door as woodwork will permit. "I shall sit near you, and expect you to tell me all about the different lovely spots as we go along."

Whereupon Con Sullivan, our driver, whips up his lanky cattle, and we start.

Having paid for our entrance into beautiful Muckross, and received our little mud-coloured tickets, we drive along the pretty avenue that skirts the Lower Lake. The water is calmly placid; not a ripple shows upon it to-day; some great bare rocks rising out of it seem poised upon its breast rather than riveted fathoms deep below. Upon them some lazy birds are perched.

"What a tranquil scene for a water-colour sketch!" says Jones, who has discovered that Miss Kingsley does a little in that way. "Mark that solitary bird upon the nearest rock. These cormorants always pose with such expression."

"Very picturesque and idyllic indeed," sneers Brooke, already prepared to disturb

the serenity of our surroundings, "only it isn't a cormorant, it's a diver."

"All cormorants are divers," maintains Jones indignantly.

"But all divers aren't cormorants," persists Brooke pugnaciously.

"Now, who would have thought there were so many different species?" says Carrie, with admirable interest. "Are there so many kinds?"

"Yes, divers kinds of divers," says Jones, with a fat chuckle at his own wit.

And now we turn into a dusky glade, and our lean steeds come to a stand-still before a gate, and we surrender our mud-coloured tickets to an aged man, and are thereupon permitted to enter the gate-way, and directed to turn to the left.

Presently we are all standing in silent

admiration before the grand old abbey, sublime in its age and countless memories. In tender appreciation of it, we wander in a loving, lingering fashion through this ancient structure of the Princes of Desmond, gazing wonderingly on nave and transept and choir, and falling into low-toned rhapsodies over the artistic windows. Little trailing wreaths of ivy creep through the crevices Time has made in the stout old arches, and merry, dancing, happy-go-lucky sunbeams are racing hither and thither, now trembling vaguely on the grey lichen that clothes the roofless walls, now sporting idly with the leaves that lie sadly on the earthen floors, now darting out once more to play bo-peep among the solemn tombs outside.

We tread the cloisters reverently, and

many a vision we conjure up of Franciscan friars pacing, with bent heads and measured footfall, these broken pavements, with beads held closely between emaciated fingers, and hearts crushed by recollections of the world outside, in which they were no more known at all, and where all the life they had ever lived had been endured. Here they waited for the last great change that should come as a glad deliverance from this lesser death. What tears had fallen upon those irresponsive beads! What voiceless cries, what sighs from poor, pent souls these cloisters have heard! and what prayers, too, and earnest protestations, and urgent entreaties uplifted to heaven!

Outside, in the square, a mournful yew tree casts its shadow over worn arches and corridors. There is a mingling of grey

marble and crumbling stone, blue sky and waving branches—a touch of old with the ever new, that impresses us strangely.

We climb the winding stone stairs that lead to other rooms above, and gaze on fresh ruins, and walls fast decaying, and a growing desolation, full of unutterable loneliness. A keen sense of sadness is conveyed to us by the sweet singing of a little bird that has lighted on the topmost stone of the belfry. Does no awe of the long-buried dead oppress this tiny songster? or is its tender melody in unison with calm thoughts of those so long passed away? Is this a soft requiem to which we are listening with moist eyes and parted lips? Through all the exquisite ruins, from ivied wall to tower, from tower to oriel window, and from thence to mouldering graves be-

yond, the gracious music thrills, lightly, harmoniously, full of a gentle ecstasy, fit emblem of a pure spirit that knows no fear.

And now we have wandered out again into the sunshine, that seems to rest with lingering gladness upon the quaint old walls, to read the names upon the sunken tombs that are scattered thickly through the mossy grass. Some are so worn that even Jones, whose sight is supposed to be his strong point, cannot decipher the letters upon them, much to Brooke's satisfaction. And now we bid good-bye to the sweet old abbey, and leave it with a sigh for its glories seen to-day, but perhaps, so sadly uncertain is life, never to be seen again.

We scramble into our places, Con cries "Horck!" with renewed energy, and away we

go again through the demesne toward Dinish Island. Our road lies through a peninsula, with the Middle Lake on one side of us and Lough Leane on the other, and all our way is bordered with flowering arbutus and golden furze. And there on our left is Torc Mountain, and there on our right is Tomies, with the placid waters sleeping beneath them both. It is a drive of unsurpassed beauty, of a richness so sufficing that when at last we come to Dinish Island, and Con, pulling up abruptly, cries "Tock!" to his horses, and tells us in a peremptory tone to get down and go see the old Weir Bridge, we feel almost aggrieved at being saturated with Nature's loveliness, and feeling that our hearts can hold no more.

Nevertheless we obey our Jehu, and stroll in the direction pointed out to us by the

palateless Con; and surely our obedience is rewarded.

O charming scene! methinks mine eyes can rest upon you even now, so distinctly does the fair vision rise before me, so calm, so gentle, so placid in this violent world,—a little speck of perfect beauty in the great mass, hidden away from the turmoils that vulgarise our lives, to refresh the souls of the poor, weary pilgrims who may chance to light upon it on their toilsome way.

It is all before me,—the two quaint old arches, time-defying, moss-grown, and ivy-crowned; the rushing, murmuring water, the great sense of *farness*, the dream of goodly things as yet unknown, where the trees hide the view, and where the water bends and sails round the emerald corner of grass and ferns to the unknown beyond.

How many years has this old bridge seen? What changes, sad, solemn, and gay, have taken place in the lives of myriads since first its stones were raised one upon another! what revolutions have shaken the earth, whilst it still stood proudly erect, waiting for the destruction that as yet has not overtaken it!

Carrie had slipped her hand within my arm. I suppose the tranquil beauty of the spot has given her strength and grace to forgive me my many shortcomings. Miss Kingsley is standing a little apart from us, with folded hands and chin slightly uplifted. There is in the very silence of the place power sufficient to produce grave thought in *most* people. But not in Jones and Brooke.

The place has not yet been found strong

enough in ideality to subdue their rancour toward each other. In the background, just behind Miss Kingsley, they are now carrying on a dispute, lively if subdued. Jones, upon our leaving the fossil, had, it appears, gained possession of a lace scarf belonging to the inamorata. To this he has clung ever since in a way that proves his determination to do or die rather than surrender it to living soul except its mistress. Though *why* he should be encumbering himself with it, is indeed one of those things that no fellow can understand. That Miss Kingsley should on such a day desire to muffle herself in that black lace is beyond probability, yet still Jones clings to it, in the fond hope that perhaps she may. Yet I think his chiefest joy in guarding something that belongs to her lies in the thought that

Brooke has nothing to guard, and is therefore consumed with jealousy.

Indeed, Brooke's indignation at his rival's zeal is both loud and strong. Ever behind us the battle waxes warmer. We, in front, strive valiantly to appear unconscious of it, but our "weak endeavour" falls through when such words as "sneaky," "underhanded," "low," and so forth float to us upon the zephyr wind.

I glance at Muriel: how is she taking it? She is standing in a Madonna-like attitude, with the sweetest, dreamiest smile upon her lips. There is a heavenly fairness about this smile that forbids the suspicion that any taint of earthly amusement may be mixed with it. She seems as far from us in thought as though we had never existed for her, and as unaware of the

disgraceful squabble behind her as the babe unborn.

Perhaps she feels my eyes upon her; at all events, she turns to me so suddenly, and with such a cruel lack of warning, and gives me so surely to understand in some undefinable way that she has caught me speculating about her, that I am instantly covered with confusion, and know that I am colouring to the shade commonly attributed to the turkey-cock.

She fixes me with a grave scrutiny until this charming if rather pronounced dye subsides, and then, as though slowly awakening from a pleasant dream, she sighs.

"How it all carries one back!" she says slowly, in her pretty voice, that has in it something mesmeric. "How it makes one *lose* one's self! Where is everybody? Are

you here still, Carrie? I had almost forgotten." She laughs a little. "It *is* a sleepy sort of old place, though, isn't it, with those pale-yellow gleams of misty sunlight glinting through the trees? And the trees themselves, see how they stoop, as though they want to drink of the running water! But it never stays for them. I feel as if the whole world were somewhere else, and I only here. Ah! Mr Brooke, you see, if you *will* stand behind me," with a faint, bewitching smile, "you must forgive it if for one moment I let you slip altogether from my memory."

"A cruel moment for me," says Brooke; "but I could hardly dare to hope I should be remembered amidst all this enchantment."

Here he looks modestly pleased with the author of this really neat speech.

"Well, it is enchanting, certainly. Mr Jones," turning to smooth down the second belligerent, with a little gracious air, "do you feel the strange influence of this fairy bridge?"

"I don't know; *nothing* could make me forget some things," says Jones gloomily.

And we are all uncomfortably aware that the boasted tenacity of his memory is as good for his hate as for his love.

"I like that," says Muriel placidly; "it shows strength. Now, I am so easily led by my imagination at any time, even by any absorbing interest of the moment. Oh, how *good* of you! Did you really think of bringing my scarf? Thank you so much. I think I'll take it from you now. Standing and—and thinking, make one so cold."

I can see that this speech pleases both

her adorers—Jones, because he believes he has been of service to her, and Brooke, because he believes Miss Kingsley has purposely removed her garment (*is* a lace scarf a garment?) from the care of the abhorred Jones. They both draw nearer, but still remain sulky, and regard each other furtively, as though ready for a skirmish at the very earliest opportunity.

"I think I never saw anything so satisfying," says Carrie, speaking for the first time, and indicating the scene on which we are gazing by a slight wave of her hand, "or so *really* old. Some day will it fall with a loud splash into its own clear waters, I wonder, and drift away to nowhere? Oh, I hope not! Dear old bridge! how many lovers have stood upon it and leaned clasped hands upon its parapets! If it could speak,

how many tender tales it could tell! What would it say, do you think?"

"'I'm wearin' awa', Jean, to the land o' the leal.'"

"Nonsense!" says Carrie, with intense scorn, and a rapid descent into prose. "Don't be absurd."

"There are certain appropriate airs to be sung all along this line," I persist mildly, "and that's the one for the Old Weir."

"I'm sure it isn't," says Carrie.

"Ask anybody," return I, looking bravely round me, secure in the knowledge that our "anybodys" are now in Killarney for the first time.

"Oh, I dare say! I like that," says Carrie, with a most unwifely want of reverence in both her tone and expression.

It subdues me.

Then she looks round at the romantic bridge again and the rushing waters, and forgets me.

"How old it is!" she says, with a sigh of satisfaction, as though the principal thing to live for is to find one's self covered with years and damp moss.

"Everything old is nice," murmurs Miss Kingsley—"old ruins, old china, old—"

"Maids," I break in humbly, fired with a desire to help and agree with her, "old dogs, old clothes, old photographs (especially of one's self). Yes, you are right, quite right; age hath its charms."

"I was going to say old friends," says our guest sweetly. "What can be compared with them?"

She smiles very prettily and meaningly at Carrie as she makes this gracious speech.

"Very few things, by Jove! for which we should all be devoutly grateful," says Jones, suddenly, in an awful voice, that seems to come from under ground, and is rich in venom. "*I* know a fellow who knows another fellow who is about the oldest friend he has, and that fellow *hates* the other fellow like poison — positively *loathes* him, by Jove!"

This remarkable speech electrifies us, and reduces us to a state of coma. I am the first to recover.

"It is a riddle," I remark feebly. "It is very kind of you, Jones, very; small games of that sort are, as a rule, so interesting; but you must excuse me if I cannot join, as I never guessed one in my life; never!"

Nobody takes any notice of this kindly

intervention. Miss Kingsley has turned her large eyes sympathetically upon Jones.

"What a pity! How *sad!*" she is saying plaintively, with flickering lashes and quite a mournful droop of her red lips. "*I* shouldn't like to feel like that, should you?"

"I didn't say I *liked* it," says Jones.

"Oh, no! of course not," she says hastily. "And we weren't speaking of ourselves at all, were we? We are all good friends, *here* at least."

She has turned towards Brooke now, and has levelled this remark at him.

"I have certainly known Mr Jones for a—a time," returns he, with reserve.

"We were at school together," says Jones bluntly, which somehow takes the curl out of his foe.

And, by Jove! here was a revelation. So they had been bosom friends at one time — chums, pals, what you will — and *now!*

"I told you," I say aloud, addressing Carrie, "that appropriate airs should be sung here and there on this excursion. This, it appears, is not only the 'Meeting of the Waters,' as the guide-book tells us, but the meeting of old friends. The air for this occasion is as follows:—"

Here I warbled sweetly, "We have lived and loved together," in an excellent tenor.

Did I lay a stress upon the word "loved?" I hope not, I think not; but unhappy things of that nature will sometimes seem to occur. I am desolated by a glare from Carrie's lovely eyes, and feel

that I am put to stand in a corner for the rest of the day.

"Really! Were you *really* at school together? How charming!" says Miss Kingsley, with smiling interest.

"For a year or so, not more," admits Brooke reluctantly, and with a miserable attempt at lightness, as though he would fain make it appear to us a week or so, or even less.

"How interesting!" puts in Carrie, with hypocritical enthusiasm. "And did you never meet since your school-days until you both came to Killarney?"

"Ye—es; we were at college together," confesses Brooke, still reluctant.

"For a very short time," breaks in Jones doggedly. "Needn't be named, it was so limited. Fact is, Brooke *had* to leave."

He pauses here abruptly, and an awkward silence ensues. He has conveyed to us a most unpleasant impression. Inwardly we all see the reprobate Brooke expelled ignominiously from his college for the commission of some heinous crime. We are secretly debating whether it was fraud, petty larceny, or murder, when Brooke comes furiously to the front. He has marked the effect of Jones's simple words, and is crimson with rage.

"My father's death alone compelled me to leave Cambridge," he says, with a vain attempt at coolness. "Why Mr Jones should trouble himself to explain my affairs *at all* I don't know, but as he has taken it upon himself to do so, it seems a pity he cannot manage to render himself intelligible."

"What did I say," demands Jones, in an injured tone, "except that you had to leave?"

"You said I HAD to leave?"

"Well, hadn't you?" says Jones.

"I understand you very well, sir; but I regard your insinuations as beneath notice."

"One wouldn't think so," says Jones, "though what the insinuations are I am at a loss to know."

"I daresay you find it convenient not to know."

"Do *you* know?" says Jones. "I have, I fear, unwittingly touched upon some sore subject, you have taken my innocent remark so much to heart. If I have in any wise hurt your — finer sensibilities — I—"

"Pray don't imagine anything *you* could say could have any influence over me," says Brooke, who is plainly boiling with rage, though still bent on maintaining a dignified calm. "You wished to raise doubts in certain minds, but you failed. Ha! you see I can read you like a book."

"What book?" asks Jones.

"*Any* book," says Brooke, beside himself with indignation.

"Oh, very likely!" retorts Jones, with a diabolical grin. "Any of those many books that stumped you at Cambridge, eh? you remember? What a *job* you were to old Harding! Ha! ha!"

Now, indeed, I conclude, has come the rash Jones's last moment! We had all discreetly turned aside to admire the old bridge again at the beginning of this un-

seemly *fracas*, and had made a laudable pretence of being stone-deaf in both ears. The lull that has now fallen upon the disputants rather awes us. The skirmish has been short, but brilliant and rich in homely truths. We should all love and admire and encourage the truth. Truth resembles leather: there is nothing like it! But Brooke, I fear, does not think so, which gives me pain. He is evidently gathering breath for the annihilation of his enemy, when Miss Kingsley's voice falls again upon the silent air, soft and heavenly sweet, and with that touch of abstraction in it that might come to one who for the past five minutes has been dead to earthly things, lost in a soul-communion.

"I never," she says thoughtfully, "was in any place so formed to make one feel

'kindly affectionate one toward another' as this. One *couldn't* feel angry here, I am certain. Anger and clamour should be far from this sweet spot."

I stare at her. She has got on a morning-service expression and a rapt, saint-like air. Her large dark eyes are fixed with soft abstraction on the splendour of the scene around,—on the orange and purple and faded green of the leaves, and the pure mingling of water and sky. No sound comes to us save the lazy lash of the stream against the stone steps on which we stand, or the distant shriek of a wild bird startled from its island-home on the lakes beyond. Her pose is perfect. Her little lecture never came from lovelier lips. Has she felt—does she *mean* it? That tender sadness, that mild air of gentlest reproof, that suspicion of sorrowful displeasure;

from whence have they sprung? She looks now like a mediæval angel, yet I could have sworn that awhile ago I had surprised upon her face a smile of deepest amusement as she listened to that first squabble about her lace scarf. Verily, she is a girl of many parts. I feel my respect for her growing and widening, and determine to show my appreciation of her by agreeing with what she has just said.

"You are right," I remark cheerily. "'Anger' is a bad thing, and 'glamour' is worse, and when both come together—"

"She said *clamour!*" interrupts Carrie sharply.

"Oh! eh? I'm sure I beg pardon," I exclaim.

After which we return to Con and the quivering waggonette, and start for the Torc waterfall.

Our drive is singularly silent. In silence, too, we pay our sixpences to the man who lies in wait for prey at the entrance to the path that leads up to the cataract, and follow each other, higher and ever higher, until our goal is reached. Indeed, were we never so conversationally inclined, speech would be useless to us as we approach the mighty roar of the descending torrent. Our winding path leads us to the very brink of this giant cascade,—so near that a step or two would send one whirling downward to death in that magnificent rush of maddened, foaming water. The heavy rains of a week ago show it to us now in all its glory.

With angry joy it springs from rock to rock, dashing its glistening foam far to either side of it, over bending ferns and frightened weeds, as it hastes away, ever downward,

with a sullen thunder, into the black chasms beneath. Of the force and power and beauty of it no man can tell. Beside the awful grandeur of its rage how small appear the petty strifes that disfigure our daily lives! It occurs to me that even the belligerents must feel this and be the better of it; but it is hard to judge, if indeed they feel *anything*, so impassive are their countenances.

They lean upon their staves and survey the wild grandeur of the falling water with a certain mixed appreciation of its beauty. But I believe a knowledge of the dire power of that waterfall to dash to atoms any life consigned to its cruel mercies is the chief charm they find in it. A step, a push, and jealousy would be avenged!

Brooke is looking profoundly, not to say savagely, serious. Is this a way given him

to rid himself of his antagonist? His eyes seek Jones. He seems as though he would cry,—"Here, now, before the lady of our choice,

> "Thyself, my mortal foe, will I slay
> With these my proper hands!"

Providentially, Jones is standing directly behind "the lady," so that an immediate attack upon him is impossible.

Green and brown and orange gleams the water as it dashes over the glittering rocks. We watch its tumultuous descent in a dumb delight that is half fear, until it disappears in the dark, leafy gorge through which it flies onward to the lake. On every side are arbutus and the stately fir-trees.

> "The branches cross above our eyes,
> The skies are in a net."

Down far below us, spread out in all their

living loveliness, lie Lough Leane and the Middle Lake, with their numerous fairy bays and "happy isles." All around us is the gloomy grandeur of the darkening hills. Glancing at Carrie, I can see her eyes are full of tears. Truly she was born with a keen love of the beautiful, a sense to be neither bought nor learned.

"Yet people will say," she murmurs, "that 'tis expectation makes a blessing dear, and that

'Heaven were not heaven if we knew what it were.'

I don't believe it. They are altogether wrong. This is nearer to perfection than anything *I* ever expected."

"How pleased, then, you will be with heaven!" I murmur back, though in truth our gentle cooings would be healthy yells if

only that waterfall could be induced to move on.

Seeing a slight movement on the part of Brooke, and a growing desire to edge closer to Jones, I here deem it prudent to suggest a return to Con, and, placing Brooke carefully in front of us on the narrow pathway, and desiring Jones to bring up the rear, I pilot my party, in good order and sound in wind and limb, to our triumphal chariot. There is no bloodshed on our homeward drive, and the rest of the evening passes with quite a noteworthy dearth of pugilistic incident of any description.

CHAPTER IV.

NEXT morning I saunter downstairs to breakfast in a mood of absolute benignity. There is no fret or jar in any of my thoughts. All my geese are swans, and everything I looked upon is dyed with the hue of the vivid rose.

Carrie is not lost to me, but has gone before, and I, in a leisurely and unimpatient fashion, going in search of her, follow my nose into a room off the hall. At the first glance I believe myself to be

the sole occupant of the room, and, stepping into the embrasure of a window, gaze out in a blissful wonder at the ever-increasing charms of the sparkling lake. Presently, however, I become aware of two voices at the lower end of the room, coming from the embrasure of another window. One of them I know to be Carrie's; the other, to my surprise, belongs to Brooke. They have both come out of their window, and, unaware of my presence, as I had been of theirs, are now standing where I can see them, apparently in close confab. What on earth can he have to say to Carrie so early in the morning? I feel it is a case that calls for my supervision, and determine *not to listen*, but to stay where I am.

"Yes, I do believe there is hope for me," Brooke is saying, in a jubilant, yet rather

faltering tone. "Oh, Mrs Desmond, can you guess all that *that* means to me?"

As he says this there is a fever of tender anxiety in his odious eye. Good heavens! is he making love to her? Am I to learn in "the morning, oh! so early," that I have been fooled and betrayed by a young man who *ought* to have been expelled from Cambridge, even if he had not been? Surely first thoughts are truest. Did not my first prejudices against these two strange sojourners in Paddyland spring from a true instinct?

"Yes, there must be hope for me!" says Brooke, gazing at Carrie, with all his depraved soul in his eyes. As he speaks, he takes her hand. *Her* hand? *my* hand! Was it not given me at the altar? There he is, holding *my* hand. Never! I'd see him

—far first. But if not mine, whose? I go into a mental calculation as to how many hands I really possess, and come out of it much the worse for wear.

"Hope!" He had said distinctly that he had "hope." Has she, then — the wife of my bosom—been encouraging him in his villainy? Has his pretended affection for Miss Kingsley been but a blind to lay my suspicions? Alas! where are all my peaceful musings of a moment since? Gone to the winds! never, perhaps, to return to my desolate breast. I feel vaguely that this is an occasion on which I should rush forward, dash my hand against my forehead, and cry aloud, "Fool, madman!" to an admiring audience. It occurs to me, too, however (happily in time), that more may be gained by an astute obliteration of my person than

by any heroics; so I remain *perdu*, and with a lowering brow prepare to listen and see with all my might.

I am richly rewarded. Carrie, with a fervour worthy a better cause, deliberately squeezes the hand of the degenerate Saxon —under my very nose, as it were, she does it, and without a blush!

Still fired with a grim determination to see it out with them and know the worst, I refrain from springing at Brooke's throat, and felling him to the earth.

"Yes, ye—es; there is *hope!*" says Carrie, in the tenderest, most sympathetic voice, that yet has, as it seems to me, a tincture of hesitation in it; no doubt a last remnant of grace as she remembers her marriage vows, and dwells for a faltering instant on her treachery to me.

"Oh, Mrs Desmond, if you could only know how happy you make me when you say that!" exclaims the vile Brooke, in a tone of ecstasy. Joy sparkles in his hateful eye. Stooping his gaunt frame, he presses his confounded lips in quite a rapturous fashion to the hand that I had deemed mine own but an hour ago.

Paralysis must have seized upon me at this moment. All is a blank. Later on I turn. I evidently made no attempt to annihilate Brooke, because presently, when I return to consciousness, I find him still alive, and still in close converse with Carrie. I nerve myself to listen once again. One more chance of life shall be accorded to this most wretched man.

It is well I so decide. Certainly mercy is "twice blessed." I congratulate myself

on my wisdom and Christian forbearance. It was most fortunate that I abstained from the momentary madness that assailed me and would have urged me to the slaughter of a fellow-creature. Now, in one blessed instant, dispelled are all my fears, restored is my faith in the only woman I ever loved.

"You remember the night before last, how she went out alone with me into the moonlight?" Brooke is saying, as I once more come to myself. "She never did that before, you know, and — and she looked at me that night so—so *kindly!*"

It takes him some time to say this, and he rather hesitates over the last word, as though searching vainly to see if his memory cannot with truth supply some warmer word. Of course I at once grasp the situation,

and know by his woebegone look that he is growing confidential over Miss Kingsley. Poor Brooke! Dear Brooke! I always felt somehow, intuitively, that he was a thoroughly good sort of fellow. Good Brooke!

"She doesn't always care to be alone with one, you know," he goes on defiantly. "That is"—with anxious look—"she feels, I mean, a natural maiden modesty that forbids her to make herself conspicuous with any one in *particular.*"

"Quite right, of course. I can quite understand," says Carrie encouragingly, and just as if she means it.

Yet I can remember a time when she made herself remarkably conspicuous with me on various occasions, and thought nothing of it. And now here she is upholding a weak-minded young man in most prudish doctrines.

"But the other night, you may have noticed, she seemed to forget all that; all was different," says Brooke exultantly.

He looks glad, triumphant. *Why?* Would he have her always, then, forgetful of the vaunted maiden modesty? Oh! fie, Brooke, fie!

"Yes, I certainly did notice a change for the better," says Carrie, smiling, whereupon I acknowledge to myself my inability to sound the depths of the female mind.

She looks at him inquiringly, and then goes on, a little nervously,—

"One doesn't like quite to ask it," she says, "but did she—I mean, did you—that is—in fact, was there anything said that might—eh?"

"Said?" says Brooke.

"Why, yes; anything that might lead her to think that—"

She pauses. To me her pause is full of eloquence.

"What?" asks Brooke stupidly.

"Why, that you were— Oh, you know what I mean," says Carrie vaguely, but looking at him with the very largest encouragement in her eyes.

"I don't," says Brooke helplessly; and instantly the knowledge that I am on the brink of inextinguishable laughter covers me with confusion. With the aid of a handkerchief and the window curtains I manage to stifle it.

"That you were *in love* with her?" says Carrie, rather impatiently, and in a higher key.

"Oh, *no!*" says Brooke, as though shocked. "I shouldn't dare—not so soon, I mean. She isn't that sort of girl at all. She is altogether

different from other girls. There is something —something very special about Miss Kingsley, as it seems to me."

"Perhaps so," says Carrie, just a little dryly. "But at least she is a woman, and I never yet knew one who didn't like to hear a man say he adored her. However, as you say, there may be something out of the common about Muriel."

"Muriel! what a divine name!" murmurs Brooke, as though the very mention of it overcomes him.

"It is out of the common, too," says Carrie, smiling. "Now, you speak to me as a friend of Muriel's, of course. You will then let me ask if you are in a position to marry?"

"I have a thousand a year," says Brooke —"not enough for HER, I own, but still—"

"People can live very happily on a

thousand a year," says Carrie kindly. "And Mr Jones?"

"He *says* he has five thousand a year," says Brooke sulkily, and quite as if he believes Jones to be lying consummately in so saying.

"It doesn't matter what any one has," declares Carrie sweetly. "Muriel is too dear a girl to be led by a mere desire for a rich establishment. It is whom she really prefers is the thing, and—"

"Well I'm positive she prefers me to Jones," says he firmly. "Of that I am assured. She has never yet permitted him to gaze upon the moon with her *alone.* I lay great stress upon that, Mrs Desmond, and believe I am right in so doing. He has manœuvred over and over again to get her away from the rest of us for even five minutes,

but all in vain. He has even tried in the most ungentlemanly way to cut me out in her graces—*me!* Ha, ha!"

Oh! the sardonic mirth in that wild laugh.

"It is all a great pity," says Carrie, who is evidently at a loss for a pretty hypocrisy.

"I think the other night proved to him who has the best chance now," goes on Brooke feverishly. "Did you see his face when I went to where she stood in the window, looking like an angel in the moonbeams? She welcomed me there: he must have seen *that?*"

"Yes, he saw that," says Carrie.

Is there regret in her tone? Here she is encouraging one suitor whilst, I verily believe, she is feeling sorrow for the other. Were Jones at this moment in Brooke's place,

I am certain her sympathy and advice would be just as freely administered.

"Then I hope he learned a lesson," says Brooke vindictively. "His manner towards me all yesterday was distinctly aggressive, but"—loftily—"I overlooked that. I could afford to; it was but the outcoming of a wounded pride. No, she would never grant to Jones the grace she showed to me. She would never favour *him* with a private audience."

By this time Miss Kingsley has plainly risen to a sovereign's height. I cannot help thinking that he has made very poor use of the "audience" granted him.

"She certainly hasn't, up to this," says Carrie.

"Mark my words," says Brooke solemnly, "she never will! She positively shrinks from

him. I have frequently noticed it. She would not go anywhere alone with Jones for the heaviest bribe that could be offered her."

Even as he says this with an air of settled triumph an awful thing happens. The door is flung wide open, and Miss Kingsley (*in her hat and scarf*, and attended by Jones!) enters the room, her arms laden with branches of flowering arbutus and trailing leaves of water-lilies. Her eyes are sparkling, her cheeks flushed, her lips red and parted. There is an expression of thorough enjoyment about her whole dainty person.

"Oh, we have had *such* a good time on the lake for the last hour and a half, whilst all you lazy people were a-bed," she says, smiling. "It was a morning to make one even in love with one's misfortunes."

A dead silence follows her little speech. It is fortunately broken by the entrance of the bull terrier, who, passing close by my place of concealment, gives me the opportunity of emerging from it swiftly as he goes by, and following him in a leisurely, dignified manner up the room. With quite an abstracted, absent air I come up at his heels, feeling all the time, as I bring my mind to bear upon his physiognomy, that he ought to be at mine.

Alas for Brooke's complexion! As he gazes upon the new-comers his self-complacency, his look of victory assured, vanishes, and his colour changes from sickly grey to green, and then to ochre: it stays at ochre.

"It was the loveliest row I ever had in my life," goes on Muriel gaily, the soft

colour of her cheeks brilliant. "We got into one of the very daintiest of little bays, where the arbutus-trees hung over our heads, and let their white bell-blossoms drop into our hands. See! we despoiled them. I brought you home this little branch, Carrie, to make you pretty for breakfast; and this for you, Mr Desmond, to pull to pieces. You see I know what pleases you."

She smiles archly, and as though unconscious of the smothered storm so near her, while Brooke, standing right before her, glowers at space and bites his nether lip, and doubtless conjures up a possible moment in the future, fraught with delirious joy, in which he shall rend in pieces the perfidious Jones and tear him limb from limb. Oh, where are all his boastings of a minute since, his vain imaginings? He had declared aloud

his belief that nothing would induce her to favour Jones with a *tête-à-tête*, and here now has she come to give the lie to his fond declaration. It is surely not to be borne. He will rouse himself, and step bravely forward and confront Jones, and tell him to his face—

"You see I did not forget you either, Mr Brooke," says Muriel sweetly. "I brought you this."

She holds out to him a tiny spray of forget-me-not. Did that wondrous isle, into whose bay they wandered, produce that too? I don't think Jones knew of the forget-me-not; his face clouds as he sees it presented to the gloomy Brooke.

"But you are not to treat my offering as Mr Desmond is sure to do," goes on Muriel coquettishly. "You are to be made lovely

with it like Carrie. See! I shall pin it into your coat for you myself, because I know the utterly hopeless stupidity of all mankind."

It is impossible to resist her gracious ways. She is standing now very close to Brooke, pinning the flower with her slender fingers into his coat, and as she speaks she lifts her eyes with a smile to his. In spite of all that has gone before, it is a moment of triumph to Brooke. She is usually calm and gentle and placid as a sleeping lake, but to-day some spirit of gay coquetry has awakened within her. Her mood is full of uncertainties, every movement is full of arch life. Beneath her touch Brooke's discontent vanishes; he is all at once another man. A fig for Jones! What signifies a row with him, when it has finished with a forget-me-

not for another?—forget-me-not! that lovers' flower, that essence of all true sentiment. Courage returns to the heart of Brooke, and colour to his cheek. Clouds break up and melt away, the skies again are blue. It is ever so much a finer morning than it was ten minutes ago — a morning *almost* fine enough to greet Miss Kingsley.

> "Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day,
> With night we banish sorrow;
> Sweet air blow soft, mount larks aloft,
> To give my love good-morrow."

This is our mood. Our moral barometer is at "set fair." So struck am I by the smiling benignity that lights the countenances of the belligerents, that I fall away from a stern resolution formed since I rose this morning. Led astray by a kind-hearted but humiliating weak belief in human nature, I

commit a fatal error: I invite both to accompany us, later on, to the Gap of Dunloe. Both — need I say? — accept the invitation.



CHAPTER V.

ONCE again Con, the palateless, draws up his horses before the door with a resounding "Tock!" and we all enter the shandrydan that seems to be our only resource in the vehicle line. The manager (who has a wooden face like a figure-head) comes out to wave us a polite *au revoir*. As Miss Kingsley again elects to sit next Carrie, thereby giving preference to no man, the new and much-to-be-admired harmony existing since breakfast remains

unbroken. With a renewed sense of security I notice this, and again hope springs within my breast as we drive along the bank of the Lower Lake, from which we have a good view of its beauties before gaining the road.

I have frequently been told by her who should know me best that my heartlessness at times is astounding. Yet I think in my secret soul that, in the main, I am a kindly man. Now it occurs to me that in the many times that *I* have been taken sight-seeing by troublesome but well-meaning friends, it has ever been expected of me that I should fall into raptures over every curve and stick and stone that we met upon our onward way. Raptures are fatiguing. Perhaps these people with whom I am to-day as guide (being the only one

of the party ever in Killarney before) will think it *their* duty to cry aloud their praises of the scenery, until they begin to wish they had never seen it. With a view to save them this annoyance, I determine to act the Good Samaritan and rescue them from the weariness and grinding torment I so often have endured.

"You will see a charming spot to-day," I begin genially; "but before coming to it, it may be as well to state that I shall expect no one to cry 'How lovely!' 'How divine!' 'How perfect!' or 'How exquisite!' even at the most supreme moment."

I smile blandly on all as I say this, but no answering smile greets mine. My amiable speech has been received with suspicious silence.

"My dear George, I don't think any of us

give way to very great extravagance of speech," says Carrie, who appears perversely determined to apply my innocent remark to herself.

"'Divine' is not a word one would care to use," says Miss Kingsley, looking straight at me, with a dear little smile, but yet an under-current of resentment. "It is rather vulgar nowadays."

"By Jove! that's your word, isn't it, Brooke?" says Jones, with a most aggressive laugh. "Everthing's 'divine' with you, from a *coryphée* to a sunset."

At these words all my fabric, built of brotherly kindness between these two young men, falls to the ground. Brooke's eyes blaze, his sallow skin grows grey; wrath, subdued with difficulty for some hours past, now bursts forth with redoubled fury.

"You are difficult to understand; you can explain your words to me by-and-by," he says, in a smothered voice, almost inarticulate with rage.

Does this ambiguous speech mean murder, a duel, assault and battery, or what? I am horrified. With the best intentions possible, I have been the cause of a collision that may end—anyhow. Still, I cannot feel myself to blame. "A noble cause," quoth Sir Philip Sydney, "doth much ease a grievous case," and truly mine is noble. I had meant to create comfort and good-fellowship all round, and the Fates alone, of their malignity, have upset my righteous designs.

"Now ye may get down and take a look at the ruins," says Con, in his own vernacular, which I alone—proud boast—can translate.

It is a welcome reprieve. We all scramble to the ground, and go up to inspect the ancient ruins of Aghadoe, to which Con has insisted on taking us *en route* to the Gap.

The ruins of this old cathedral delight Carrie. For one so bright and full of life, it is astonishing how partial she is to old bones and musty tombs and the melancholy remnants of humanity with which the grounds of Aghadoe are strewn. Over the round tower—or at least what remains of it—Miss Kingsley and Jones fall into ecstasies. To them, too, the Romanesque doorway in the cathedral is a "joy for ever." And indeed it is "a thing of beauty," not to be lightly passed by, with its pillars and its semi-circular arch, connected by an exquisite fretwork. A delicate

sunlight falling upon all wakes it to even clearer beauty.

"Ah! see those chevrons," says Miss Kingsley, standing back, with her hand to her brows, in an æsthetic attitude, to gaze upward at the arch. She is so far forgetful of her usual calm as to lay her hand excitedly upon Jones's arm.

"And those beads in *mezzo-rilievo*," supplements Jones, taking advantage of the elevation of the moment to lay his hand on hers. To my amazement, she does not resent this, or make any attempt to restore her fingers to her own keeping for quite a minute. When she does so it is slowly and absently, as though unaware that anyone has sought to retain them for even a short space of time.

"How sad that all such interesting me-

mentoes of a past age should fade out of our lives so irrevocably!" she says, with a little sigh, turning her limpid eyes on Brooke, who is lost in gloom, and declines to emerge from it.

"Is there anything that shows such delicate kindliness as ivy?" says Carrie softly, gazing up at the straggling, fond, clinging ivy that covers the crumbling stones with its loving tendrils. "See how it seeks to hide the defects of its old friend!"

"Yet the defects can be seen," says Brooke, in a hollow tone.

After which we all go back to the waiting Con.

A glimpse of fresh mountains, as yet unseen by us, makes us presently forgetful of Aghadoe. Here is Bull Mountain, and a better view of the Reeks than we have

had up to this. And now the little touch of the purple mountain that comes to us from beyond Tomies rises clear and dark against the sky, and Con tells us we are coming closer to the goal of our expectations. We turn the corner of a road all lined with glowing yellow furze that is never out of bloom ("when furze is out of blossom kissing's out of fashion," says a frolicsome old sage), and from behind a hedge springs upon us a gossoon, wreathed in rags and smiles, and armed with roughly-prepared sticks made out of the wood of the very furze we have been admiring.

"Dear me!" says Carrie, rather nervously, edging up closer to me as she notes this bare-legged apparition.

But not for purposes of war comes he: to sell is all his design.

"A stick, gintlemen? A good furze stick—a K'larney stick, sir? An illigant shillelah, yer honor! Buy it sir, *do!* 'Tis dead chape it is — on'y one shillin', yer honor!" cries he, running with easy grace as fast as the horses until we come to a hill, when the latter slacken speed, and the day is his own.

"Oh, what curious sticks! how quaint! And those little ones, how pretty!" says Miss Kingsley, smiling at the half-naked lad, who instantly acknowledges the power of her nameless charm, and goes down before her as abjectly as either Jones or Brooke.

He has, however, more audacity than either of those more presentable adorers, and smiles back at her as she ceases speaking, with the pretty, shy, vivacious humour

of our peasants. Like all his race, he loves a pretty face, and, indeed, beauty in any form.

He has good reason to smile at Miss Kingsley, for she brings him luck. The moment she gives it as her opinion that the sticks are to be admired, a regular rage for them sets in. Jones and Brooke instantly regard them as objects of priceless worth. The sum asked for them seems absurdly low. The gossoon's stock is speedily disposed of, to Carrie's infinite satisfaction, who, in spite of his undeniable good looks, continues to regard him as an advanced brigand.

"What have good looks to do with it?" she whispered back to me when I venture to remonstrate with her. "I feel convinced he is a Land Leaguer, and that that tattered garment hides a revolver."

"Why not say an assegai at once, or a boomerang?" suggest I, with fine scorn.

Each of our youths has by this time cumbered himself with not only one unwieldy weapon for his own use (with a view, no doubt, to the amicable settlement of future debates), but with a second slighter rod that one cannot help seeing is meant for Miss Kingsley.

I, too, led away by her favourable mention of the furze sticks, buy one, because I don't want it, and Carrie makes herself miserable with another, with a view to depriving the brigand of a second mode of attack when the revolver fails him. It is a road-traffic connected from time immemorial with the Gap, and we all feel we have done our duty nobly by it when the boy stands stickless before us.

"Miss Kingsley," says Jones, handing her the little stick he has bought for her, just as Brooke is stooping forward to make a similar offer, "pray take this: it will help you to ascend the path at the Gap that Mr Desmond has been telling us about."

"Yours is too thick, I *think*," says Brooke, with elaborate politeness and a ghastly attempt at mere friendly interposition, in which rivalry holds no part. "This"—holding out his—"will, I fancy, suit her better."

Here is a dilemma for our pretty lady. I watch the next move (hers) with an anxious eye. Once again we stand on the brink of a precipice, on the verge of open war. Something tells me it is Jones's day, that his will be the chosen reed; and, if so, what will Brooke do? Will he go for

the "favoured one" and fling him beneath the wheels of our chariot? In breathless suspense we all hang upon Miss Kingsley's coming words. She hesitates. It is plain the situation is a little too much even for her. It is indeed a difficult moment, which she employs in dropping a bracelet from her arm and making diligent search for it. But a bracelet, however careful you may be not to see it, does not take long to find when four officious eyes are bent on its discovery, and presently we feel the final moment has come. Brooke and Jones are holding out to her in a truculent fashion two hideous sticks; she has opened her lips to pronounce sentence, when Providence, in the shape of the gossoon, comes to the rescue. He has stolen closer to her side of the waggonette, and now suddenly whisks from

behind his back a straighter, a smoother, a more refined stick than any he has sold. It is indeed a very dandy among furze-sticks.

"Maybe the lady will take it, to plaze me?" he says shyly, thrusting it into Muriel's astonished hand; and before she has time to recover herself, or bestow upon him any largess, he has sprung away from us and disappeared through a gap into a field on our right.

"Oh, what a funny boy! what a *pretty* boy!" says Muriel. "See! there he is again."

We have nearly gained the top of the hill, and, looking back, can see the picturesque boy in his very unpicturesque rags staring eagerly after us. Muriel waves her hand. He tears his torn cap from his head

and waves it high in the air; then we turn a corner, and lose him out of our lives for ever.

"He was a *very* pretty boy," says Miss Kingsley thoughtfully. "And how sweet of him to give me this little present!" She looks affectionately at the rough little stick in her hand. She seems, indeed, inordinately grateful for it. Out of what a dilemma has it not lifted her! "These Irish peasants have such charming ways," she says.

"Here was the very spot, yer honor, where the murdher was done last March," breaks in Con, at this appropriate moment. "They batthered out his brains ag'inst thim stones, ma'am, an' left him so that his own mother didn't know him, except by his clothes. May the saints have mercy

on us, an' make it up to him, the poor crathur!"

"You are right, they have very pleasant little ways at times," I whisper to Miss Kingsley, who gives me a reproachful glance in return.

"To look at them, one would think them the best-humoured people on earth," says Carrie mournfully, "and yet what terrible things they are capable of!"

"Ay, fegs," says Con, "an' not a thing did that poor soul do but pay his rint regular. "'Twas a bloody deed, an' the night white wid the moon. Glory be—How could they do it, wid the stars of heaven shinin' down on 'em?"

Here we come to a cottage, or rather hut, out of which half-a-dozen semi-naked little children rush tumultuously and run

after us. The race, at all events, is sometimes to the swift, because they beat Con's horses all to nothing, and come up with us in no time, breathless, but triumphant.

"A ha'penny to buy a book!" shout they, as though with one lung.

Now, this book for which the demand is so loud and unanimous is a primer belonging to their National school, used by these ragged urchins. They believe no well-minded person will refuse them a copper for the purchase of so useful an object, though, in truth, I doubt if the money received by them for that purpose ever goes to the futherance of their intellectual pursuits.

"And I'm sure I hope not," says Carrie, whose principles are plainly of the loosest. "I hope they will be able to buy gingerbread or sweeties with it, or something of that sort."

"They won't, thin," says Con, who has grown very affable towards us, and has shown a friendly inclination to strike into our conversation on every available opportunity. "The parints o' thim spalpeens just lives by the money they makes out o' the tourists in the summer and autumn. More shame to thim, say I, for the bringin' up o' their dacent childher as beggars."

Here we pass another cottage, from which a second shower of children pours out, to mingle with those already in our wake. Soon quite a little army is in full pursuit. One lanky, long-legged girl, echoing loudly the popular cry, attracts special attention.

"Why, you ought to have read every book in your school by this time," says Carrie, laughing at her. "You are too big to go to class."

"Sure, couldn't I read somethin' at home?" says she, with a merry twinkle of her large wild eyes. "Haven't ye ne'er a book in yer own house, ma'am?"

"Hard study will spoil your pretty eyes," say I. Whereupon Carrie tells me not to put silly thoughts into the child's head.

"Sorra fear," says "the child," with a grin, throwing back her head until her brown locks shake again.

"Oh! look there," exclaims Miss Kingsley suddenly,—"at that boy with the dark eyes. Isn't he like an Italian, like something of Murillo's?"

She bends forward, and seems wonderfully taken with a little black-eyed chap who runs panting beside us, with flowing locks and a face like a dirty angel.

"Isn't he a picture?" she says enthusi-

astically. "How I wish I hadn't given the others all my small change! I suppose"—hesitating over a half-crown that lies in her palm—"this would be foolish—eh?"

"It would be wrong, disgracefully extravagant," says Carrie severely. "Put it away; we have all given them quite as much as they can possibly expect. You"—with flagrant inconsistency—"haven't anything small about you, have you, George?"

I haven't. A careful search in every pocket proves this.

"Let us ask Con for some change," I suggest brilliantly, finding we are all destitute of the lesser coinages. "Got any change, Con?"

"No," says Con sternly; "an' if I had I wouldn't give it to ye. What folly it is, throwin' yer good money about like that!

'Tis too much thim young scamps have got already. An' 'tis shame ye ought to be takin' to yerselves for helpin' thim in their idle, beggin' ways."

No entreaties can soften the obdurate Con, though we now firmly believe that if he stirred in his seat he would clink with coppers. Even Miss Kingsley's blandishments are of no avail. He treats us as though we were all children committed to his care by the wooden-faced manager, and declines to help us to squander our substance. Miss Kingsley gazes wistfully at her live Murillo, still running in trustful expectation by our wheels. Fear of Carrie's severe rebuke alone keeps her from dropping her half-crown into his small brown palm. She is beginning to look positively unhappy, when Jones, stooping over the side of the

waggonette, drops to the boy a large silver piece. His great eyes light up with pleasure and gratitude as he stops short and gazes at the unlooked-for possession. With a glad heart, no doubt, he thinks what a welcome addition it will be to the scanty purse at home, what good things it may bring to the meagre larder.

"Now, that was good of you," says Muriel, turning to the fortunate Jones with sparkling eyes; "you were more generous than I was. I quite hesitated over this wretched half-crown."

It is evident to all that Jones by his kindness to the boy has scored one, and Brooke grows grey with suppressed envy.

And now we can see where the mountains divide, and where, far off, the famous Gap must be.

A man, riding up to us, asks if we will ascend the narrow pathway on ponies; but we all decline his offer, and declare our intention of doing it on foot.

He is scarcely gone when another man emerges from a hovel on the roadside and lays his hand on the side of our vehicle. He is a most miserable-looking wretch.

"Yer honors will want a man to give ye the echoes," he says, in a low, melancholy voice barely above a whisper. "I'm the one for ye; it's meself can give thim in fine style," he declares, with a consumptive wheeze.

"To *give* the echoes?" asks Miss Kingsley vaguely.

"To shout until the mountains ring again," I explain pleasantly.

"To shout!" repeats Miss Kingsley, with a glance full of eloquent meaning at the husky man.

"Oh, George, don't get *him*," entreats Carrie, in a tearful whisper. "He *couldn't* do it; he looks as if one good honest shout would be his death."

Being quite of her opinion, — although smitten with regret that I am so, and must therefore decline his services, — I inform the melancholy man that we all, both great and small, are of an organisation so delicate that the sound of an echo would reduce us to powder. Having thus delivered myself from the shower of abuse that a blunt refusal of his offer would certainly produce, we proceed upon our journey, until we are again stopped by two women, who plainly regard us as legitimate prey, and

pounce upon us from a slated cottage as we pass by.

With a request that sounds like a command that we will taste their "mountain dew," they present to us small glasses of goat's milk dashed with whiskey.

"Dhrink it, ma'am, if only for luck's sake," say they to Carrie and Muriel, and thus adjured, they get through it without any very remarkable grimace. On the whole, it is not a *very* bad compound.

And now we near the Gap. The road rises, and little wooded heights appear. Upon our left tall fir-trees rear their stately heads, one towering above the other as they mount by gradations up the hills, as though bent on dressing them in their stiff, dark greenery. There is a gleam of silvery rocks amongst them, a glitter of running water;

through the branches a suspicion of pale-blue smoke comes from some cottage half hidden.

"It reminds one a little bit of the Tyrol," says Muriel musingly.

And now we come to the spot where the first echo is to be heard, and, getting out of our waggonette, we prepare to listen to it. I have forgotten to say that we picked up and engaged another guide with a more promising voice than our first friend, who tells us he has been "giving the echoes" to tourists for the last twenty-four years. He is a wiry-looking little man, with a comical eye, and a tongue that refuses rest.

Leaving us now, he moves a few yards from us, facing the mountain, and makes ready for our entertainment. First he clasps

his hands firmly behind his coat-tails, thereby giving them a gentle swing upward, bends his body in two, and finally gives vent to an unearthly screech that makes Carrie (who is unprepared for it) jump. From mountain to mountain this sound flies, as though it were the yell of some imprisoned monster chained in some vast rocky dungeon near us. Five times it is repeated, ever growing fainter and more bitterly wailing, until it dies away amongst the distant Reeks into an impressive silence. Again our guide lifts up his voice, but this time there comes from him a soft, clear note, tender, loving, melancholy, that floats from hill to hill, making sweet music to the listening ears. Ever softer and softer it becomes, until it too fades away into space. We are all enchanted, and are expressing

our delight, when another sound checks us. Mocking laughter seems now to come to us from behind the stern mountains that close us in on every side. It is everywhere: near us, far off, over our heads. We scarce know where to turn for it. "Ha—ha—ha! Ha—ha—ha!" Weird and wild it rings through the air, until at length we begin to feel just a little uncanny. Our guide is openly enchanted with the effect he has produced upon us, and throws in a final shout before taking us farther on our way.

But we are not to go yet. A man, who has apparently sprung out of the earth at our approach, proceeds to fire off for our delectation a tiny cannon placed on a projecting piece of ground about eight feet square. For the use of this little plot of

ground, he tells us, he pays his landlord six pounds a year; so it is to be hoped the tourists who stay to hear his cannon fired pay him liberally. The effect of the little explosion he gives us is really wonderful, and suggests the idea that a short-lived battle has just taken place somewhere behind these massive mountains. Having bidden our cannoneer a kindly adieu, and added somewhat to the "sixpence a shot" charge he has brought against us, we go on up the stony road, and soon arrive at the entrance to the Gap.

Our guide taking one luncheon-basket in his charge, we arm ourselves with the other things, and, glad to be rid of our tremulous vehicle for a time, leave Con in charge of it, and set out for our walk. The guide goes on in front, whistling "Nora Creina"

with immense cheerfulness, whilst we all follow. Miss Kingsley clings to me, Carrie impounds Jones; the gloomy Brooke in silent majesty brings up the rear.

"Here's the toll-gate, ma'am," says our guide, whose name is Mick Dempsey, turning as we come to two huge boulders that stand high on each side of our path, facing each other. They really do resemble the pillars of a gateway. "When Finn MacCouhal cut the mountains in two to make this Gap, ma'am, he put these stones here wid his own hands to guard the way. 'Tis thrue for me, though maybe ye won't believe it."

I can see that Carrie is much struck by the guide's words, and would give her little finger to be able to believe them.

"There were giants in those days," I

whisper to her, in kindly encouragement, as we go on again.

But how to describe the gloomy grandeur of the Gap itself, with its dark, mountainous sides, its sullen lakes, all inky black, the mysterious sound of hidden waters rushing through it? Winding upward, the rugged pathway leads us deeper and deeper into the heart of the mighty mountains that stand serene and awful throughout the ages. High up upon the rugged cliffs white specks can be discerned, that presently resolve themselves into goats. A sense of utter loneliness falls upon us, born of the mystic silence that wraps this wild ravine. With unexpressed desire for freedom we look heavenward, to where the broad sky is over all, flushed, exquisite, with its clouds of rose-red melting into tender grey.

Our guide, who is totally unimpressed by the stern beauty of the scene, breaks in upon our thoughts.

"See! there's the Eagle's Nest, ma'am," he says, pointing to a crag that is barely discernible; "an' here, sir, is St Pathrick's Lake,—the Black Lough, we call it; an' 'tis cowlder and blacker thruly than the others. 'Twas here the saint (may he be good to us!) threw the last sarpint in an' dhrownded him. 'Tis the identical place, ma'am. In an iron chist he shut him, and flung him into the wather there, below yer foot. An' isn't it quare, ma'am, not a fish will live in it till this day? Herbert o' Muckross an' others have thried it agin and agin, an' 'tis all o' no use."

Later on we discover that our guide's statement is true, though it is supposed

that some mineral substance, and not the "sarpint," is the cause of the fishes' disease. Seeing Carrie's chagrin at this trampling on old legendary lore, I kindly suggest that perhaps it is the iron clasps on the "chist" that have tainted the water ever since. My well-meant remark is received with contemptuous silence.

"You seem to have a regular store of anecdotes," I say to Mick Dempsey, turning to him as a more congenial companion than the others: he at least will not treat me with open scorn.

"Fegs, I have that same," says he, delighted at my appreciation of his conversational powers.

An envious depreciation of *mine* by those who shall be nameless has not soured my naturally perfect temper.

"I could tell ye tales by the hour," says Mick Dempsey genially, finding in me a kindred spirit. "An' there's a good one I remimber now. Ye niver heard o' Pat Daly, did ye?"

With a sense of growing unimportance I sadly confess that as yet that illustrious individual is unknown to me.

"Well, he's a guide round here, like meself, an' not bad at the echoes aither, but not as good as me, though I says it as shouldn't. (Mick Dempsey, guide: ye'll recommind me to yer frinds, won't ye, sir?) Well, whin Pat Daly was takin' it upon himself to set up here as guide, he wint to one o' the ginthry round an' axed for a few lines o' caracther to show to the English tourists that might be comin' this way. The gintleman axed him

in turn if he could read, an' Pat towld the truth for once an' said he couldn't. 'That's bad, that's bad,' says the Squire; 'but you shall have yer lines, for you're as dacint a man as I know, if a thrifle given to the murdherin' o' yer neighbors.' So Pat got his papers, an' away wid him to the enthrance o' the Gap to wait for the tourers. An', sure enough, soon there came along a large party o' the English folk, that he knew by the checks on their breeches (saving yer presence, ma'am) an' the die-away look o' the ladies. So Pat, wid his paper in his hand, walked up to thim as bowld as brass.

"'An' what are you, me good man?' asks the foremost o' the party.

"'A guide, yer honor,' says Pat. 'If

ye misthrust me, read this; 'twill spake the thruth o' me.'

"So the gintleman squeezed his eye into a glass an' began to read it; an' afther a bit he turned as pale as a turnip, an', 'Good heavens!' says he, an' whispered somethin' to the others, an' the womin gave a screech, an' away they all wint, like a flock o' sheep, down the path agin, the way they had come, an' was niver heard o' since. An' Pat was mighty glad to be rid of 'em so aisy, for he thought they was a party of lunatics that had escaped from the asylum up in Killarney. But a second an' a third party o' the Saxons behaved jist the same, an' thin it began to grow serious, for Pat was earnin' nothin' at all, an' starvation was beginnin' to be good friends wid him, whin there come along a lot o'

studints from Dublin, an' whin they read his lines they all burst out a-laughin' till ye'd think they'd dhrop. They wur Irish, ye see, an' knew a joke whin they saw it. An' prisently, whin they could spake for laughin', they read aloud to him his charac-ther; an' sorra word o' good was there in it at all, but jist a few lines, sayin', 'For the love o' the Vargin an' the good of his sowl, let no man thrust the barer o' these lines, for a more thunderin' villain, or a cuter robber, or a nater murdherer there wasn't in the counthry; an' that though as yet they hadn't been able to bring his crimes home to him, the whole Gap was strewn wid the bones o' his victims!' Ha —ha! Fegs, 'tis himself could tell ye that story grand, an' how the Squire who wrote the paper for him nearly choked with

potheen and laughther when he heard it all, an' give him a five-pun' note to make it up to him. Will I give ye another echo now, here, ma'am? 'tis a mighty good place for one."

Again he bends forward, places his hands behind his coat-tails, and throws them lightly into the air. In this position he resembles nothing so much as a superannuated blackbird. But this time his efforts to call forth an echo fill us with amaze. It becomes apparent to us that a person of the name of "Paddy Blake" lives somewhere in the interstices of the mountains. He is first affectionately, then sternly, then angrily desired to "come out o' that," and when he declines to leave his rocky fastness is accused of all sorts of low misdemeanours, such as of being "dhrunk and disorderly"

over-night, and so forth. I am beginning to feel distinctly grieved for Paddy Blake, when our guide's manner to him undergoes a complete change. "From grave to gay" it turns, and quite a light and airy conversation now enchants the ear.

"Good-morrow, Paddy!" "Are ye at home th' day?" "I hope ye're quite well this mornin'?" "Whin did ye return from France, Paddy Blake?"

Mark the tender solicitude in all these queries. I cease to grieve for the recipient of so many and marked attentions. And now our guide seems determined to probe him as to whether he ever really was or was not in the land of frogs.

"Parly voo Francy, Paddy?" "How was the Mossoos whin ye left?" "Vooly voo dancy, Paddy?"

Which invitation, it may be presumed, Paddy accepts, as he sends no answer to it, and silence, we all know, gives consent. There is indeed to me something insolent in the way Paddy repeats aloud all his friend's questions, without deigning a reply to them or ever volunteering any remark of his own. This thought, however, I confine to my own bosom, with my usual amiability, having always had a lively horror of mischief-makers.

Our guide has now ceased to address the distant Paddy (knowing him, probably, to be executing a private *can-can* in his own home), and is again extracting sweet sounds from the echoing rocks. His wild, soft cry rises on the wind, only to be repeated more softly and with increasing wildness by the listening hills, whilst we stand

by, charmed and awed by the strange sounds of Nature roused.

A tall, handsome lad, the proprietor of another cannon, comes forward here and fires it off before we have time to know even what he is going to do. Perhaps our ignorance of his design makes the effect of it even grander. From heights and hollows a thousand replications of the sound bursts forth. From the Purple Mountain to the Reeks and back again the crashing thunder is hurled, until all the dark Gap rings with the grand artillery of the angry rocks. Like distant thunder it dies away, rolling sullenly farther and farther off, until at last, when it ceases, we fail to understand its death, and believe it has but passed beyond our ears into regions still unknown. As its passionate rage ceases from us, the music of the

stream that rushes through the gorge makes itself felt, and brings us back to calmer life with a sigh. It is a stream full of conversation, though somewhat sad, as befits the character of its home. We have scarcely yet been helped by it to a forgetfulness of the late assualt upon our nerves, when we become aware of the presence of three barefooted girls standing upon the pathway before us. By this time our party has become a little separated, and Jones has found an opportunity of establishing himself beside Miss Kingsley.

One of the girls, stepping forward, holds out to us some knitted socks.

"Buy thim, sir?" says she coaxingly. "Ye'll find thim good, for I knitted thim meself. Do now!" Then suddenly her soft roguish eyes fall on Jones and Muriel.

"*You'll* buy 'em, sir?" says she confidently. "Ye ought, ye know, for we've waited a long time for ye."

"For *me?*" says Jones imprudently.

"For you an' your good lady," says she, with a courtesy to Muriel, who turns a lovely crimson. But Jones is plainly enraptured. He declines the socks, but gives the lucky spokeswoman something by which to remember him when he shall be gone.

We are all afraid to look at Brooke. Will he give way to rage before which the late storm among the mountains will pale and sink into insignificance? He at least, is not pale, he is almost purple with repressed venom. Why on earth did I ask these two young men to accompany us today? What irony lies in the thought that I had suggested to them that they

should spend a happy day with us in this wild gorge!—Happy!

"What pretty girls those were," says Carrie hurriedly, "but how—how strange!"

"Uncivilised, I am sure you mean; your kind feeling alone suggests the word 'strange,'" says Brooke, in an impossible tone. "They were both rude and uncouth, and evidently very much wanting in penetration. You are right, Mrs Desmond: they are an ignorant peasantry. I quite agree with you."

Poor Carrie! She said nothing of the kind, yet, in his present mood, she is afraid to contradict him.

"He looks so sour that I shouldn't think he'd 'agree' with any one," says Jones, in a loud aside to me; but fortunately no one else hears it. "However, there's no accounting for tastes."

"Poor things! I suppose they *are* ignorant," says Miss Kingsley thoughtfully. "And one can see they have no penetration," with a soft, absent look at Brooke that somehow tells upon that young man, and reduces his colour to a delicate mauve. "But they are very pretty, aren't they? and full of life and er—*verve*, and that."

She may be vague, but she is certainly eminently successful. Brooke's mauve subsides into a still more natural hue, and fear of an explosion disappears, at least for the time being. Carrie makes a light suggestion that is well received by all, and

"Sunshine sweeps across our lives again."

And now the Logan Stone is pointed out to us by our loquacious guide. It is a huge boulder, at least twenty feet in circumference,

poised upon another rock, and so perfectly balanced by the devil (according to Dempsey) that it will move with the touch of a child.

"An' now, if ye don't mind a little rough walkin', ma'am, an, as ye are not goin' home be the lake, I'll take ye across the ground a bit to where ye'll git a grand look at Coom-a-Dhur," says Dempsey, who, like James, has taken a special fancy to Carrie, and addresses her alone when any fresh proposition is to be made.

Carrie expressing a determination to surmount all difficulties, we quit the main pathway and step lightly, if with difficulty, in Dempsey's wake, over wet stones and scraggy edges of rock uprising from the ground. Stumbling heavily over unseen roots of furze and heather, we manage to reach at last a

point that is evidently a favourite with our guide.

"An' don't ye look, now, ma'am, yet awhile!" he cries. "Keep yer eyes on yer toes till I bring ye to the right spot. Fegs, I bet 'twill reward ye."

It does. Standing upon a high eminence, we look down below us to where stretches the black valley (or Coom-a-Dhur) in all its perfect beauty. Through it runs a rapid river, small, sullen, but tumultuous, subject to violent floods that inundate its banks and neighbouring fields at certain seasons. In the distance are trees, in the further distance a soft view of the Upper Lake. For miles the lonely valley extends, bound in by grey, gaunt mountains,—a voiceless, dreary spot lying there silent, motionless, with scarce a touch of life. On the left, far as the eye can

see, the gaunt hills rise, casting an everlasting shadow on the sleeping valley,—a shadow from which, perchance, its gloomy name has been derived. On the right lies the placid Upper Lake, laughing in the merry sunshine as it coquets lazily with its many fairy isles and dances in its tiny bays.

"You have indeed given us a rare pleasure," says Carrie, turning to the delighted Mick Dempsey.

"What is it like?" asks Miss Kingsley, in a low tone. "What an idea of desolation it gives! And those two or three poor cabins seem only to increase the feeling. It reminds me of something, but I don't know what."

"It is like the valley of the Black Umvolosi in South Africa," says Jones critically. "There is a wildness about it that suggests the other scene."

"You judge from pictures," asks Carrie, "or from some friend's experience?"

"From my own," says Jones. "I was in Africa during the late war. I happened to be in Natal at the time, and went up the country with Wood's column."

We all feel instinctively that he has risen in the estimation of every one of us. He has seen a *real* war! He has been probably face to face with dozens of black Zulus!

"And you mean to say you saw an actual battle?" says Carrie, quite purring over him.

I begin to dislike Jones.

"Oh, *do* tell us how they throw their assegais, and if they wear feathers in their hair," says Muriel, bending towards him, her eyes alight.

I can see that Brooke is again meditating murder.

"No, there were no feathers," says Jones, laughing; "and they threw their assegais just like this."

We have all laid our walking-canes against the ledge of a rock behind us, and as he speaks Jones carelessly lays hold of one of them.

"But did you really see an encounter, Mr Jones?" asks Carrie cautiously, to whom wars and tumults are a never-failing source of interest.

"Oh, yes; several," says Jones, in the airy tone of one who, having seen more than most, thinks nothing of it.

To some of those who are listening this tone is offensive.

"Why don't you tell them at once that you got the Victoria Cross for an exploit of special daring?" says Brooke, in a loud but hollow voice, and with a sardonic laugh.

"Because I never tell lies," returned Jones loudly, glaring at his opponent.

His emphasis is full of terrible possibilities. Brooke, as one can judge by the lowering of his brow, is calling together all his mental forces to make him a crushing reply, when—Miss Kingsley, as usual, comes to the rescue.

"You haven't shown us how they throw the assegai yet, Mr Jones," she says sweetly. "Mr Brooke, come here, close to me, as I am sure he will fling his stick in *that* direction."

"Well, here goes," says Jones.

He raises his arm, cane in hand, and precipitates the latter into the Black Valley, far, far below.

"Hold! stop!" cries Brooke, rushing forward. "That was my stick—*mine!* What business had you with it? Make an ass of yourself and an assegai of your *own* stick, if

you like, but spare other people's. Where is it now?"

"'Oh, where, and, oh, where, is my Highland laddie gone?'"

quote I, the sincerest sympathy in my tone; but nobody seems to believe in me.

"Your cane!" says Jones, with a suspicious amount of astonishment, as it appears to me. "Dear me, dear me! I'm sure I'm awfully sorry. Never mind; take mine instead. Keep it as a memento of one of the happiest days of your existence, eh? Ha—ha!"

Jones is fat, and so is his laugh. It is a rounded laugh, and very infectious. We all join in it, though in bodily terror of the consequences of our untimely mirth.

"How strange that a valley in Ireland should so closely resemble one in Africa!"

says Carrie hurriedly, more with the design of preventing Brooke from bringing in a crushing remark than from any surprise at the fact.

"Not more strange than Miss Kingsley's finding a resemblance between the entrance to the Gap and the Tyrol," says Jones. "It merely shows how Nature, like history, repeats itself in the most unlikely places. I believe there is no smallest spot upon the globe that has not its counterpart in some other distant clime."

"'Beautiful words,'" quotes Mr Brooke, with seething sarcasm. "Perhaps, out of your boundless stores of knowledge, you will kindly give us some little hint, or quote to us some brief passage that will enable us to share your belief."

"Let us eat our luncheon first," suggest

I peaceably. "Is there anything, Carrie, in those baskets we have been bending under ever since we left Con? or must we conclude that they are filled with stones? If you have attempted to play a trick of that sort upon us, it will be a sorry day for you, as, in default of anything better, I feel I shall eat you."

In truth, I am in great haste to allay the pangs of hunger, feeling as if our last meal had been consumed about a week or ten days ago.

"Yes, I'm hungry too," says Miss Kingsley, as though surprised at herself, though she is, in fact, that most charming of all things, a lovely girl with an honest appetite.

I regard her with increasing admiration. She is gowned in a pretty blue serge that

fits her lissome figure to perfection, and her eyes are lustrous and gleaming.

> "Her mouth full small, and thereto soft and red,"

is slightly parted as she smiles on our "melancholy Jaques," the forlorn Brooke, with a sweetness that should have melted a heart of stone.

It melts Brooke, certainly, to warmer love, but fails to lift him from his slough of despond. He is so deeply embedded in its mud that not even Beauty's self has power to raise him.

He regards her with gloomy appreciation. To him it seems

> "That, as of light the summer sunnë sheen
> Passeth the star, right so over measúre
> She fairer is than any creatúre."

"Yes, luncheon by all means," says Carrie briskly, and soon we are seated at that pleasantest of all meals, now pleasanter than ever because of its being an *al fresco* arrangement.

But we are not allowed to enjoy it properly. The imminent fear of an outbreak between the youths, the many warm reminders that but a treacherous peace is reigning, the badly-subdued rancour that bursts out in tiny but deadly flashes now and then, all combine to destroy with ruthless force our vain endeavours to be innocently mirthful. Once I make a praiseworthy, if mistaken, effort to promote good fellowship all round; but Jones having openly declined to see it, and Brooke having "gorgonized me from head to foot with a stony British stare," I give it up, and subside into dull

silence and the pie on my left. Perhaps, indeed, to be more correct, the pie subsides into me. It little matters; all is gloom!

The luncheon is irreproachable, the *patés* beyond praise, the wine very good, there is not so much as one grain of salt in the cream, or a suspicion of sugar on the chicken, yet, nevertheless, these young men damp all our spirits and crush our rising wit. As a rule, I am an excessively meek member of that meekest of all classes called husbands — there is hardly ever a moment when a child might not in safety play with me—but yet I *can* be roused. Just now, seeing the havoc these miserable young men are making of our day, I wax indignant, and permit my temper to get the better of me.

As we all rise from our impromptu table, I step aside to where Carrie is standing alone, and make my assault upon her.

"*Now*, how do you like your young men?" I whispered to her, with true bitterness of soul.

"They are not my young men," returns she, with dignity, surveying me from a moral height that dwarfs my material inches and shatters my nerves. "If they were, I should *at once* know how to reduce them to order, and show them how to conduct themselves."

There is a hidden warning in these words I am not slow to mark—a warning I feel I shall do well not to despise. So, conjuring up the weak shadow of a smile, I tell her I quite agree with her, and relapse into my usual submission. She is graciously pleased

to accept my change of mood, and instantly gives way to her own grievance on the same subject.

"It is really too bad," she says. "I do all I can for them, and they are worse than prize-fighters. I'm sure I don't see what is to be the end of it all."

"Jones will be the end of it," say I, in a deep, mysterious tone. "You mark my words, she means to have Jones. It is my secret conviction that she likes him best."

"Nonsense! It is Mr Brooke, you mean," says Carrie. "He is most devoted to her, and she never repels his attentions. He is most persistent in the way he follows her about, and—and all that sort of thing."

"He may 'go on forever,' like his namesake all but the *e*," return I steadily, "but

I'm positively sure she means Jones. Jones has the money, you know, and it always counts. There *may* be 'virtue in an if,' there *certainly* is virtue in a landed estate. If put to it, I feel I should back Jones."

"I think you would lose your money," says Carrie. "Look at them now!"

To look at them is to see that they are at deadly feud one with the other, whilst Miss Kingsley, calm and smiling, stands between them, conversing amiably of the weather.

"Of course they are each determined that the other sha'n't walk down the Gap with her," says Carrie, with a sigh. "Dear me! why can't men be reasonable?"

"Women won't let them," say I.

The conversation between Miss Kingsley and the belligerents is growing every moment more and more animated. But pre-

sently Jones, turning aside, lifts up his voice and addresses himself to Carrie.

"You were asking me yesterday about the Killarney fern, Mrs Desmond," he says, in a friendly tone: "it seems it is not so impossible to procure, after all. Brooke says he knows all about it. Tell Mrs Desmond what you have been saying to us, Brooke."

"Well, I certainly should like to get it," says Carrie, falling easily into this trap. "*Can* I manage to get it, Mr Brooke?"

Thus questioned, there is nothing left to the wretched Brooke but to step forward and forsake his post of vantage. With the full knowledge upon him that if he turns a deaf ear to Carrie's remark rudeness will be laid to his account, he yet hesitates before quitting Miss Kingsley's side and leaving

Jones in full possession of the adored one. Yet how can he answer a woman by yelling to her, when a simple step or two will bring him to her side? Carrie is waiting expectantly. A struggle, sharp but fierce, takes place in the breast of Brooke. Then, with one malignant glance at the adversary who has so artfully drawn him into this difficulty, he comes forward.

A smile lights up the obese features of the ingenuous Jones. Truly, it now seems the day is his own as he turns to Miss Kingsley and suggests their commencing their downward walk. I, for one, do not fail to admire his statesmanlike guile. Yes, I am right: Jones's star is in the ascendant. Brooke is nowhere.

Yet the very next move on Miss Kingsley's part upsets all my preconceived ideas,

and compels me to begin my weavings afresh.

"There is always danger in a downward path," she says, with grave demureness. "One should choose a trusty friend as pioneer. You are too new an acquaintance for the post. Mr Desmond," with a touch of coquettish petulance, "as you brought me up this weird old Gap, surely it is your duty to take me down again."

And so as was our order of ascent is our descent—Carrie being again given into Jones's care, Brooke once more in gloomy solitude trudging behind.

"Farewell, sweet Coom-a-Dhur: Farewell, Black Valley!" cries Muriel, turning before we quite lose sight of it to wave a loving hand and waft it a spirit kiss.

"They do say there isn't the like o' it

anywhere," says the guide, with exceeding pride.

But a touch of sadness has fallen upon us, and no one makes him a reply. Perhaps our silence is sufficiently impressive to satisfy him.

A peasant-woman coming our way presently, Carrie addresses her. I daresay she is a relief from Jones, who has grown glum and taciturn. She is a faded woman, with a huge bag of something or other on her back—probably "praties"—and a black eye.

"You have hurt yourself," says Carrie, regarding the darkened eye with gentle sympathy. "How did it happen?"

"Wisha, I don't know, alanna, but 'tis always knockin' meself about I am," says the woman, in a soft, helpless monotone. "Last night I'd like to kill meself, but I got off wid a bad eye, glory be—"

"It must hurt you, indeed," says Carrie, who is compassionately regardful of the lack of intellect in the expression of the woman's countenance.

"Iss fegs; but it might be worse too. 'Tis nothin' at all, dear. They do be jokin' me about it up home, an' askin' who give me the black eye; but sure I am a widdy this many a day, an' there's no one to give it to me at all now, God help me!"

This simple regret is too much for us; we all smile involuntarily.

"Is your husband long dead?" pursues Carrie, when she has frowned us down.

"It seems a long while to me, my lady; I miss him a good deal off an' on. He was a very handy man, an' not too ready wid

his fist; but Father Jerry says as how it is the best as is always took."

"You got on well together, then?" says Carrie kindly.

"No that bad, yer honor. Jist in the beginnin' when we was married — that is, for the first nine or ten years, ye'll undherstand — he was the divil an' all when the dhrop was in him; but one night, shortly after that, he come home mad dhrunk, an' so loose on his pins I wasn't afraid of him, so I up wid me own fist an' I give him a nudge on the brow wid a nate little potstick as come handy to me fingers (an' used to be the rung of a sugawn chair, the like o' which, honey, ye won't see now), an' it cut him a bit an' dhrew the blood. An' afther that, fegs, he had the greatest respect for me, an' never raised

his voice above a whisper when I'd be near. Oh, wirrasthrue the day! but he was the sad loss to me! There wasn't a betther man in all the counthry round."

She looks really distressed, sincerely sorry.

"Poor soul!" says Carry, and squeezes something into her hand. Then we all push forward again, leaving the disconsolate widow and her mysterious bag behind us.

"What a melancholy mouth that poor peasant had!" says Muriel, after a while.

"A weak one," I suggest humbly.

"Yes, weak," confesses Carrie reluctantly, who has fallen in love with Killarney and its inhabitants, man, woman, and child, and resents as a personal affront a word in their disfavour.

"Mouths are so expressive," says Jones,

—"far more so than the eyes, in spite of all that poets may say."

"Poets say a good deal for mouths too," I remind him amiably. "Even so long ago as in the days of Sir John Suckling, they knew what a pretty mouth meant."

"So they did," says Jones enthusiastically. "I remember the quotation to which you allude. It applies to the mouths of to-day, as well as to those of the past yesterday."

He glances with expressive tenderness at Miss Kingsley, and then repeats slowly,—

> "Her lips were red, and one was thin,
> Compared with that was next her chin;
> Some bee had stung it newly."

His gaze is waxing positively warm, and we are all beginning to criticise with much

loving kindness the quaint old lines, when we are struck dumb by Brooke. He has broken into a loud, discordant laugh.

"What an absurd amount of nonsense is spoken about poetry, *so called!*" he says irreverently, "and how insanely impossible are many of the lines before which we bow down and worship! Just fancy, for example, Miss Kingsley's lip if a bee *had* 'stung it newly'! Why, it would be out of all proportion,—like Jones's nose!"

He laughs again, wildly. Is there in this rude mirth incipient madness? Jones is looking apoplectic. There is little time to be lost.

"You are right!" I exclaim genially, seeing Carrie is too far gone to be of any use. "The sting of a bee is no joke. It would make the prettiest lip ugly in less

than no time, and twice the size of any *ordinary* nose."

"There! Of course, *as usual*, you have said the wrong thing," whispers Carrie, in an agony. "You have as good as said that Mr Jones's nose is twice as large as anybody else's."

"Aren't you pleased, Mr Jones?" says Muriel, with a little seductive smile, glancing at him from under her long lashes. "You have just been told that my mouth and your nose are as lovely one as the other."

How she has arrived at this reasoning no one knows. Not a soul, however, dares to argue with her or dispute her right to come to any conclusion she may choose. Jones cheers up. His apparent determination to fall upon Brooke and smite him hip

and thigh dies away; once more he saunters on with Carrie down the rugged glen.

And now again we pass St Patrick's Well, and cross the two rustic bridges that span the river rushing so merrily through the lonely Gap, — past the turnpike, past the Eagle's Eyrie, and so on and on, until we come to our starting-point and the faithful Con.



CHAPTER VI.

OUR drive home is singularly silent, our dinner marked by a careful reserve. Even the bull-terrier seems struck by the strange quiet that has fallen upon us: probably he regards it as the proverbial calm that preludes the coming storm.

Later on, in the drawing-room, Miss Kingsley remains persistently beside Carrie, and refuses to be inveigled from her retreat or drawn into any *tête-à-tête* whatsoever. It is with increasing appreciation of her mental

strength I note this power to cope with stratagem. At an early hour she declares herself, with a pretty smile, "so very, *very* tired," and bids us all "good-night." This she does with a slow grace that suits her; and if it seems to me that her hand lingers longest in that of Brooke, the idea it gives rise to is speedily set at naught by the fact that certainly her eyes rest more contentedly on Jones. I am still lost in a maze of doubt as to her real meaning, when Jones himself comes up to me, and tucks his arm into mine.

Will I come out of doors and have a cigar with him before going to bed?

I'm not such a dullard that I don't know what *that* means — fatuous talk about Miss Kingsley until, through sheer weariness, my lids drop over my miserable eyes. But

I haven't the courage to refuse, and, with a sigh for my victimised self, I succumb to his fleshy grasp and permit myself to be led from the room.

I am right. Without a preamble, without so much as a decent leading up to the topic, he launches forth into praise of the immaculate Muriel.

"Did you ever meet anyone with such a heavenly temperament?" he says, when he has exhausted a barrowful of endearing epithets upon her personal loveliness. "The way she treated those little ragamuffins we met to-day going to the Gap! Did you notice it? She looked as if she adored them, one and all. I believe she couldn't see that their faces were dirty. That's what I call true saintliness of spirit. Her soul was filled with a divine pity for their wretched con-

dition. To *me* she seems positively faultless."

"There is nothing more admirable than strong belief," remark I sententiously.

I throw extra force into my manner, to cover the fact that I am gradually dropping into a state of somnolency.

"There were moments," goes on Jones, clinging affectionately to me, "when I had my doubts as to whether I or another (who, in spite of all, shall be nameless) had the first claim on her affections. They were weak moments. To-day has solved all doubts. *Now*," says Jones, turning to me with alarming rapidity, and laying his hand with a proud gesture upon his massive breast "I know that it is I—*I* who am preferred. You think with me?"

I murmur a sympathetic reply. I fully

and entirely agree with him. In truth, I see no reason why he should *not* consider himself first in favour with Miss Kingsley. At the same time, I see no reason either why I should not equally agree with Brooke, were he to ask me the same question.

"Yes, yes. She was more than sweet to me all day. That fact could not have passed unobserved by anybody." This somewhat viciously. "She's a perfect angel!" goes on Jones, with a rapturous sigh. "She is more than human."

This is just a little too much for me.

"Oh, look here, you know, Jones, I wouldn't, if I were you," I remark, in tones of grave censure. "To traduce the girl you love isn't form, you know. It—it isn't *nice*."

"Traduce—*traduce!*" stutters Jones, growing purple. "Eh? eh?"

"I believe," I return judicially, "that I just now heard you make a remark to the effect that Miss Kingsley, in *your* opinion, 'was more than human.' Now, how does the case stand? I am a poor authority, I know, but tell me now, if a person is said to be 'more than human,' may she not be reasonably called *inhuman?*"

This conundrum I propound most anxiously, as one athirst for information.

Jones, I can see in the clear moonlight, is growing as mad as mad can be.

"To be wilfully misunderstood!" he mutters angrily, and presently takes himself off.

Thus am I mercifully delivered from a lover's tirade that would probably have lasted

but for my subterfuge, until the stars began to wane.

When I am positively assured that he has gone well out of my sight, I return to Carrie, and suggest a swift departure to our room, so as to avoid a second encounter with him. Being sleepy, she accedes to my request without a murmur.

"Well, I'm quite sure you are wrong about Mr Jones," she says, as we toil up the stairs. "I am almost certain Muriel intends accepting Mr Brooke."

"You're wrong, not I," I return, with conviction.

"I'm not," says Carrie.

"You are," say I.

"I believe she *hates* that poor Mr Jones," persists Carrie.

"Well, time will tell!" exclaim I, feeling further argument beyond me.

"To-night shall tell," says Carrie firmly, and, stopping suddenly in the middle of the corridor, she forsakes my side, and, entering a room upon our left, disappears from view and leaves me to go on alone, disconsolate.

Time passes. Evidently it is a more difficult task than she imagined to wring the truth from Muriel.

Good heavens! could she have entered the wrong room, and been done to death by an hysterical old maid dreaming of midnight assassins? I am beginning to be suspicious of foul play, and full of sleepy suggestions to a sluggish conscience, to the effect that I, or the bull-terrier, or the wooden-faced manager should go on a voyage of discovery in

search of her remains, when the door opens and she herself, in the uninjured flesh, appears upon the threshold.

"Well, is it Brooke?" I ask, with some faint wakening into animation, and a sharp return from the Land of Nod, into which I have been wandering.

I receive no reply.

"Silence gives consent," I remark, with hypocritical hilarity. "I bestow my congratulations and my benison on the fortunate Brooke. Let no false shame hinder him from accepting both. Though their intrinsic value is priceless, they wouldn't, I fear, fetch much."

"Oh, do be quiet!" says Carrie, almost tearfully.

There is about her such an air of chagrined surprise as she sinks into the near-

est chair that my jocosity slips from me, and, ashamed of my abominable flippancy, I place an arm around her and look unutterable sympathy.

"Go on," I whisper; "tell me what she said to you."

"Nothing."

"What! After all this time?"

"All what time? I wasn't a moment away."

"I thought it was a year," return I reproachfully, which pleases her, and presently her grievance breaks into sound.

"She would tell me nothing, not a word. When, at first, I just dropped a little hint about Mr Brooke, she began to laugh, and said she had no idea I was so—'so attracted by him,' and she has laughed *ever since.* I said I was sure he loved her, and she said, was I? I repeated my assurance a little

sharply, whereupon she declared it was very good of him, that she wasn't 'worthy of him,' and all that sort of nonsense. Then I came to the point and asked her outright if she didn't believe he was in love with her. She said, 'Dearest Carrie, you do ask such difficult ones; no one can guess them. Never mind, *I'll* ask you another instead: Do you think he loves me or hates Mr Jones the most?' Of course I felt then there was nothing more to be said to her on that head, so I changed ground and said I should like to see her happy,—as happy as I was. I put that *in*, you know, to give a colour to it," says Carrie, as though apologising to me for having told such a flagrant untruth.

"It was very good of you to go as far as that for me," I return meekly. "It is more

than I deserve. What answer did she make to you?"

"She said—you will understand it was nothing but an idle compliment—but she *did* say," confesses Carrie reluctantly, "that she didn't dare hope to get for a husband such a 'darling' as I had secured."

I was right: Miss Kingsley is a nice girl. I am very glad I asked her to stay with us; it was an excellent thought of mine. She is a remarkably intelligent girl. Outwardly, however, I take no notice of this last proof of her rare intelligence.

"True, true," I murmur modestly.

"Oh! that's all nonsense, you know," says Carrie. "You aren't the only man in the world by any means."

Plainly her late conversation with that charming Miss Kingsley has ruffled her plumes.

"There was a time, Caroline," I remark with some austerity, "when I was given to understand that, to a certain person at least, I *was* the only man in the world."

"A time? What time?" asks Carrie frivolously. "And as to your being the last of your species, I'm sure if that were so the world would be a far more desirable place than it is at present."

"Be it so," return I mournfully. "If my halcyon days are flown, I must e'en be resigned. But no cruelty of yours can alter the fact that you are still to me the one *woman* in the world."

"George, what an amount of humbug you can put into one short speech!" says Carrie contemptuously.

But I can see she is delighted with me, and thinks my sentiments above reproach.

Having scored, I go back to the original topic.

"So you could get nothing out of her?" I say.

"Nothing, beyond unlimited laughter. Perhaps she thinks it unwise to express any sentiment until that stupid Brooke proposes. Of course it is awkward for her."

"I would still bet on Jones," say I. "There is a solidity about Jones, both in his build and his banking account, that is sure to tell in the long run."

"Isn't it odd," says Carrie thoughtfully, "that, though we have been thrown so entirely with them during these past few days, we yet haven't the faintest notion which of them it is she really prefers?"

"She is a clever girl," remark I carefully.

"An enigma," says Carrie.

Thus agreed, we retire to rest, at peace with each other and the world—only to rise again next morning. It is astonishing with what forbearance we (who profess to think variety so charming) treat the eternal monotony of Nature. We sleep to wake; we wake to sleep again. And if by any chance some lucky thing occurs to break through this routine, instead of being grateful for it we deem ourselves ill used.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was a deadly rain last night. All through the ever-greens the drops still drip, the flowers are burdened with its spray, yet with the light came sunshine and a zephyr wind and a promise of good things to come.

The little reign of weeping — now past and gone—has left a subduing influence that contrasts warmly with the glowing rays great Phœbus is casting broadly on earth and lake and mountain. The water,

as though tired of last night's turbulence, is lying exhausted, swaying gently to and fro, and glinting beneath the sun's hot touch.

"Whither are we bound to-day?" asks Jones at breakfast, with such a blithe belief in our inability to go away anywhere and leave him behind as puts to flight all courageous determinations to shun him.

"To the Upper Lake, I suppose," says Carrie kindly.

"Ah! I shall be glad to see that," says Brooke, toying gracefully with his egg, and letting an expectant smile steal over his lean countenance.

Truly, as it seems, we are in for it.

Not another word is said, but when we—Carrie, Miss Kingsley, and I—saunter down to the boat, it does not surprise any of

us to find Brooke and Jones waiting for us.

Past Lamb and Heron Isles we go again, until Ross Castle, with its tower and floating flag (Lord Kenmare, for whose coming the flag has been hoisted, arrived at the castle last night) and ivied bastions and quaint buttresses, comes into view. And then again past "sweet Innisfallen" and Mouse Island to the water beneath Tomies, whose brown plateau lies dark and gleaming in the sunlight. Some sheep are browsing upon the top of the hill; the gable of the cottage shows grey against the dark background; the trees seem full of newer tints.

Still on and on, with James the boatman smiling on our delight at the beauteous Nature round us, to where Stag and Burnt Island stand together close against the

shore, with Tomies towering aloft upon their right and overshadowing them. In the clear-cut sedges with their brown heads large lily-leaves lie broad and flat upon the water, with crimson berries floating in and out between them. Upon a dark-grey stone a heron, most solitary of birds, stands dreaming,—a thing as grey as its resting-place.

And so on, through Brickeen Bridge, to the Muckross or Middle Lake.

"There's fogs and storms on these lakes as ye wouldn't believe," said James, addressing himself, as usual, to Carrie. "'Twas on'y a fortnight since, ma'am, as I was caught in one o' thim wid a party of the English folk."

The fact that Carrie has sprung from the Emerald Isle is as well known to James, by instinct, as if her pedigree was

read to him. It enhances her value, and renders her doubly dear in his sight.

"For, fegs, thim English is mighty scarce wid the civil word," says James to me on a later occasion. "Why, they'd think it shame to offer a poor man the full o' his dhudheen; an' to give him a chance o' convarsin' wid them would kill thim intirely. 'Tis aisy to know Mrs Desmond is one o' the right sort."

"Well, did you get safe home?" asks Carrie now, seeing he wants to tell her something.

"I didn't thin, indeed, ma'am. The fog came down as thick as a blanket just as we come to Brickeen Bridge, so I towld thim 'twould be madness to thry an' find our way home, an' I had to git 'em to go ashore here," pointing to the

peninsula that leads from Brickeen Bridge to Muckross. "'Twas many a mile they had to walk till they came to Muckross Gate, an' there we found all in bed, an' the ould woman at the lodge hard enough to rouse. By dint of yellin' an' throwin' stones at her windy I brought her out at last. She opened the shutter an inch or so, an' says she, 'Who's there?' 'A frind,' says I, as bowld as brass. 'A *frind?* The divil!' says she, screechin' it out like mad. An' would ye believe, ma'am, the ould varmint left us to climb the gates at that hour, swearin' to us all the time she'd report us to Herbert o' Muckross, an' git the law of us."

"I hope there won't be a fog to-night," says Carrie, laughing.

"Oh no, ma'am," says he, with a twinkle

in his grey-blue eyes. "They've manners enough, thim fogs, to know when they shouldn't come on."

"'Tis a wonderful land," says Jones to me in a fat whisper.

"There's the Divil's Bit, ma'am," says James, "that great rock there in the middle of the lake. Ye'll see where he tuk it out of if ye look up at Torc for a second."

We all glance at beautiful Torc, with its darkly-wooded sides, and mark where, on part of its topmost ridge, there is a hollow that looks as though a piece had been bitten out.

"'Twas the ould gintleman himself and the O'Donoghue as had a bet on it, ma'am, as to who could carry that stone widout dhroppin' it, from Torc to Ross Island. An' the divil said he was equal to it, an' his

price for carryin' it was to be The O'Donoghue's sowl, for he'd a great hankerin' after him; an' though they were the best o' frinds, still the O'Donoghue held his own wid him, an' gave him no chance to git a hoult o' his spirit. Well, the O'Donoghue agreed to risk his sowl, an' the divil in great glee bit the stone out o' the mountain and flew towards Ross. But, fegs, it was too much for him, the ould blackguard, an' halfway across the lake it slipped from him, and dropped jist where ye see it now. An' 'twas mighty fine game the O'Donoghue made of him afther that."

We have crossed the lake by this time, and come to Toothache Bridge, which leads from the Middle Lake to The Meeting of the Waters.

"An', indeed, ma'am, an' 'tis no lie for me, once ye pass undher that bridge ye'll

never have toothache ag'in," says James, with solemn belief.

And now we pass under the old Weir Bridge, and enter on the beautiful channel of running water called the Long Range, that leads to the Upper Lake. Shadowed by wild Torc, grand and majestic, we steal down this heavenly stream, our senses filled with the silent beauty of its verdant banks. Here and there on every side rises peak above peak in the great walls of hills that line our way on right and left. There is a strange stillness in the air, a marvellous light on all things, unknown to other lovely scenes. There is no sound anywhere save the harmonious rippling of the water against the sides of our boat.

And now we are gliding past the Eagle's Nest, a tapering mountain, and James, rest-

ing on his oars, sends forth a wild, musical cry, that is caught up by a splendid echo, and rung through many changes until it dies away into a sobbing silence.

Then somebody remembers the "coo-ee" of the Australian colonists, and we call it aloud, and find it has a wonderful effect among these hills; and so we will teach it to James, and hope that in the future he will make use of it with other visitors, and so have something of his own to give them, unknown to the boatmen around.

Then on again, by our wave-girt shore, past fantastic rocks and gleaming water-weeds and wet green grasses, to Coleman's Eye, a promontory which shows we have come to the end of the Long Range, and are entering the Upper Lake.

Of all three lakes surely it is the loveli-

est, with its fairy isles and grand old mountains, its tranquil, lonely calm, and its glimpse of the Black Valley far away in the distance. Down the sides of the mountains run little rills, pale and bright as silver beneath the sun's hot rays. Tall pine-trees, dark and solemn, crowd to the water's edge; some swans, with proud arched necks and spotless plumage, glide here and there. It is all, in truth, a sight to make glad the heart of man.

The arbutus dips to drink, shedding its flowers upon the tiny waves that carry them far from the parent stem. Some red leaves, bright as blood, drift with them. Through banks of brown, crisp, fading fern, tinged with a brilliant crimson, we float, past masses of grey rock and boulder clad with daintiest moss, whilst James descants aloud to

us on the beauties of the islands we go by—the Arbutus, the Oak, and Juniper Isles, clad with their namesakes, and the Eagle Island, so called because there are no eagles on it.

"Well, there *used* to be," says Carrie indignantly, who is full of faith.

Then Ronayne's Island, where, James assures us, some lunatic who passed for sane once lived for many years. Why, or for what, deponent sayeth not, but I have dark dreams of a mother-in-law as we steal slowly past it.

M'Carthy More's Island is the last we come to. On it the cedars of Lebanon flourish and grow green, and throw their branches far and wide.

Carrie grows very High Church again as she hears this, and Miss Kingsley says, "It is interesting."

It is a scene so satisfying, so entirely without a flaw, that I feel I should go to sleep but for the pangs of hunger that have assailed me. Landing on one of the islands, we proceed to the cold pies and chickens without further delay. It is a sultry day; not even the water in a shady nook, into which we have plunged it, makes the champagne cool; but, nevertheless, we are grateful for it.

We have suggested to James that the water out of this same nook will be the coldest to mix with his whisky; but he being of opinion that water spoils that liquor, we leave him to his own devices.

"Thank ye, ma'am!" says he. He always steadily ignores anyone but Carrie. "Ye've brought us an uncommon good lunch (ye'll see how I pick up yer own words, ha! ha!),

an' we're obliged to ye, but if ye'll lave us the whisky *nate*, I think 'twill be more agreeable to us."

This settles the question.

When luncheon is at an end, we all rise with one accord and suggest a tour of the small isle on which we have dared to land.

"Oh that there might be hope of savages!" says Carrie, with enthusiasm.

However, in spite of her prayer, we meet nothing, and finally reach a tiny bay surrounded by grey rocks, on one of which we come to a standstill.

"How quite too utterly sweet!" says Jones, who has a mad hankering after the new religion of Art. "Mark its depths, its possibilities, its—"

"Mark Muriel's glove!" cries Carrie suddenly.

It has floated away, slowly, inconsiderately, just out of reach. She had been leaning over the huge rock that lies close to the water's bosom, and it had slipped from her and become part of the flotsam and jetsam of the sparkling lake. We had indeed been all stooping over the shelving rock when this catastrophe occurred, watching the water-grasses swaying to and fro.

As the glove is seen drifting away we all start into life; there is instant concern on the part of everybody. Regardless of our anxiety, however, it floats slowly farther and farther from us. Somebody surely ought to catch it.

I am conscious of a deep sense of gratitude as I remember I am no longer a gay bachelor, and that therefore it is not *my* duty to come to the relief of fair

damsels in distress. That pleasant privilege devolves upon Brooke and Jones. Hoping they like it, I stand at a respectful distance and watch their proceedings with a keen interest.

Brooke has flung himself upon his face and hands, and is projecting his body in a most dangerous fashion over the edge of the rock in a futile attempt to recover the lost treasure. Every moment I expect to see his heels in the air, his head out of sight, so uncertain is his position. He seems wildly bent on the recovery of the glove, which in a tantalising way bobs here and there, but never within reach. Now nigh, now far, now almost within his grasp it dances, but yet not near enough to surrender itself a prisoner.

In his endeavours to reach it Brooke is

growing unpleasantly red. I begin an elaborate speculation as to whether it will be victory with him or death from disease of the heart, when a move on the part of Jones upsets my thoughts. He has not been idle. He had rushed into the wood behind us on Carrie's first cry, and now emerges from it armed with a huge crooked stick denuded of branches, which he waves aloft.

"This will do," he pants huskily.

"Oh! it doesn't matter, indeed not the least bit," says Miss Kingsley earnestly. "I wish you would both forget all about that wretched glove."

But it is too late for directions emanating even from the beloved. Jones in turn prostrates himself upon his stomach, and, thrusting out his forked stick, proceeds to dibble for the glove.

Delicately, in a coaxing manner, he pats the water near where the desired object sways gently up and down.

"There *is* something coaxing about Jones, after all," I whisper to Carrie, as we both stand together watching the comedy that is being enacted so close to us.

"Take care it doesn't turn into a tragedy," says Carrie solemnly. "I mistrust those two young men."

It is plain to everybody that they mistrust each other. Fire flashes from their eyes as they regard each other with glances of deadly hatred. Then Jones makes his final effort. It is the moment in which victory seems nearest to Brooke. Almost he is assured of it. His fingers have all but closed upon the coveted glove, when Jones's seductive tap upon the waters shakes the advancing wavelet that

bears it on its crest toward Brooke, and—oh! maddening thought—changes its course and bears it straight to Jones.

Is he, then, to be the Sir Francis that is again, in modern days, to rescue his lady's glove? Perish the vile thought.

Wild with jealous fear, Brooke stoops still farther over the shelving rock, and makes a movement of his hand in the water meant to imitate and spoil the effect produced by Jones's rod. Alas! it only serves to drive the glove still nearer to that demon. His brow grows black as thunder; the game is slipping from him. Jones, with a fiendish laugh, stoops over and makes ready to seize the skin of contention. Farther, farther still he stoops! The prize is his! He flings away the faithful stick that has done him such good service, without so much as a

grateful glance, and bends to secure the glove.

Just a little *too* far he bends; he loses his balance; he makes a convulsive clutch at his prey. Then there is one awful moment, when his heels attain an unenviable notoriety and his head sinks into the watery abyss, and the world knows him no more! He has vanished from our horrified sight, perchance (who knows?) never to rise again.

He does, however. In a most *inconsiderately* short time, and with a startling amount of very unromantic spluttering and puffing and choking, he comes to the surface, strikes for land, and is soon hauled ashore by me. In doing him this service I get extremely wet. I should, of course, have avoided the doing of it if possible, but I felt assured that if the task were left to Brooke

the man would be most surely drowned. To avoid, therefore, an inquest on the morrow, and to save Brooke's soul from the stain of blood, I lend a helping hand to the dripping Jones.

Oh, the satisfied malice that gleams in Brooke's eye as his rival emerges in doleful plight from the bosom of the lake! Oh, the curl of his lip, the undisguised satisfaction in the tip of his long, lean nose!

"I have got it!" cries Jones, with unsubdued delight, as he clambers up the shelving rock with my assistance, Miss Kingsley's glove between his teeth.

He looks like a fat retriever, but no one can doubt his pluck. He has forgotten his ducking, his deplorable situation—*all*, save the fact that he is victor. He proceeds to lay his trophy at his lady's feet.

"Indeed, I think you might be allowed to keep it for your prowess!" I exclaim enthusiastically, in spite of the water that has run up my sleeves and saturated my cuffs.

I feel, as I look at the author of these discomforts, that I am in truth returning good for evil.

"If it were worth keeping," says Miss Kingsley, with pretty hesitation, bestowing a smile upon her shivering knight; "but it is such a horrid, wet thing, and—"

"I *may* keep it, then?" says Jones rapturously, stuffing the clammy glove into the bosom of his dripping shirt.

He is overwhelmed with delight. Gratitude beams on his shining face, and trembles in his dank locks, as he turns his gaze on me. I have been the benefactor of my

species as typified by Jones. He bows down to me. I feel I have made him my friend for life.

I glow beneath the conscious virtue of a kind act performed. Even as I glow, I glance at Brooke. Instantly my face falls. Good heavens! what have I done? I have made *him* my enemy. This is a fearsome thought, as sad experience has taught me that a friend means but little, an enemy, much. I lose myself in mournful reflections.

When I return to a sense of surrounding objects, I become aware that Jones has disappeared—probably with a view to wringing his nether garments before starting homeward—and that Brooke and Miss Kingsley are sitting together on a moss-grown rock. Carrie is out of sight (not with Jones, I trust), and I am tolerably so too, because

of the huge tree against which I have leaned during my late abstraction.

A few words of the dialogue carried on within a yard or so of me float lightly on the zephyr wind to where I am standing.

"It was a most treacherous act," says Brooke, "and worthy of him who committed it. In all fairness, that glove was really mine."

"Poor glove!" says Muriel lightly. "It was not worth all the trouble it gave. The idea of risking your lives for the sake of a soiled bit of *suède!* It was too foolish of you both."

"It wasn't for the glove we risked our lives, or rather the chance of a wetting," says Brooke, growing sentimental. "You *must* know that."

"Indeed I do not. I saw only a glove,

for which," reproachfully, "you both fought as though you were two schoolboys. Do you know, Mr Brooke," very sweetly, "if I *could* be angry with you, it would be now."

Can it be possible she means Brooke, after all? Is Carrie to have this crow over me?

"It was for something far dearer than the glove we strove," declares Brooke, growing almost lachrymose in his increasing emotion. "Oh that I might dare to say more plainly what I mean!"

"You are as plain as possible," says Miss Kingsley, with a kindly air of encouragement. "I quite understand. But it is rather wrong of you, you know. To encourage such rancorous feelings in your breast is very wicked. Yet, somehow,"

turning up eyes innocent as a dove's to his, "I can sympathise with you. It is 'something far dearer' than the mere rescue of a glove to gain a victory over one's enemy. Though why you should call poor Mr Jones your enemy—"

"That isn't it at all. You have taken quite a wrong view of my words," says Brooke eagerly. "That wasn't what I meant—"

"Yes, that was quite what you meant," interrupts she smilingly, but in a tone that prevents his pursuing the subject. "And I don't wonder at your not 'daring' to say it to me. Let us forget it, however; that stupid glove is to be blamed for it all."

"That priceless glove!" says Brooke, who really seems to me to be going it to-day,

and no mistake. "How could you"—tearfully again—"have given it to Jones? But he sha'n't keep it; I am resolved on that."

"Tut! let him have it," says Miss Kingsley. "After all,"—in a low, soft, dreamy voice,—"a glove doesn't count for much, does it, unless the hand is *in it?*"

Is this coquetry, or a mere laudable desire to prevent "battle, murder, and sudden death" on our homeward way? The voice of Carrie, coming from the small landing-place, compels my instant retreat from my present position, and my reappearance again in a moment or so from a totally opposite direction.

"Where is the whisky, George?" cries she. "Poor Mr Jones is shivering terribly. He ought to be made to drink something,

to prevent him from catching his death of cold."

"Oh yes, indeed!" says Muriel earnestly, as we all come up to the boat, where James has covered our wet friend with an old oil-skin coat that may be useful, but is hardly ornamental. Out of its voluminous folds Jones looks at us, blue but heroic.

"I'm—all—right!" he declares, with a determination to die game, but giving each word seven or eight syllables in spite of—or rather with the full concurrence of—his teeth, which are distinguishing themselves as castanets of a very high order.

He takes his whisky with a thankful eye, however; and James takes some, to keep him company, and says, "Shlointh-a-houth!" to Carrie, which means, in Irish, "Good health to you!" and throws the one or two drops

he leaves in his glass over his left shoulder into the lake, for "good luck's sake."

And now home, with all speed, because of our shivering friend. Across the lovely vale we go to the Long Range again, which seems impossible to find, so curiously are the rocks arranged about its opening.

It has grown to evening now, and a sense of coming twilight is in all the air, and with it that touch of silence that ever belongs to it. Sleepily yet swiftly we creep along between the giant hills, not speaking, but enjoying in a rapturous reverie the fair feast Nature has prepared for us. The very boatmen have grown silent; the oars make but a bare murmur as they break the water. A stillness that is almost oppressive has fallen upon us.

And then, lo! a flapping of huge wings,

and slowly, slowly, a heron rises from among the grey boulders on our left, and sails away from us in haughty, dignified fashion.

"Pretty thing!" says Muriel. "Did you see with what contempt he glanced at us over his great grey wing? He reminded me of some Spanish grandee, some old hidalgo, with his solemn movements and his unconquerable pride."

Her voice has broken in part the rather melancholy spell that was holding us. In a subdued fashion James begins to croon some wild old Irish ballad, and we feel that his voice, with the song's monotonous refrain, chimes in well with the grey quiet of the evening.

And now the current increases in rapidity, the water's chant grows louder, the old Weir Bridge is again in sight.

"Sit steady now, ma'am!" cries James.

The men take a keen glance ahead, the oars flash through the water. Nearer we come to the arch, and still nearer; the water seems to foam and rush. There is a last strong pull, the boatmen ship their oars, and with an exquisite little touch of excitement we shoot the rapid and find ourselves in the tranquil waters beyond.

Then under Toothache Bridge we pass, into the Middle Lake, and, crossing it, row under Brickeen Bridge, into the Lower Lake, and so we feel we are indeed close to the end of our day's journey.

"I am sorry when I think of that," says Carrie, with a sigh—"if it weren't, that is, for Mr Jones—"

"I'm as comfortable as possible," squeaks Jones, with unexhausted amiability, though he is now as hoarse as a raven.

All over Glena Bay lies a soft mist, like a silken veil; from the wooded heights of Tomies comes to us the plaintive bellowing of the deer, inexpressibly lonely, inexpressibly sweet. Behind us looms Torc, dark with shadows of the coming night, though above it the heaven is still bright with glorious day, and on its topmost peak lingers a mass of low, soft cloud, white, trailing, fleecy—like a descending train of silvery angels come once again to gladden the sad earth. All down the slopes this fair and holy vision comes, melting as we watch it, and sinking at last into the arms of the placid lake beneath.

And now there comes a strange little rush of wind across the water, and a sudden sighing, and a quick and angry moan as if from the fir-trees yonder. The pale-pink sky fades into sullen grey, that brightens momen-

tarily, and then dulls again into a dying blue. Purple-black against this wild background rises Tomies, grand and stately.

"Alas! where are all our angels now?" says Carrie, glancing in dismay at the changed face of heaven.

"There'll be a little squall, I'm thinkin'," says James.

And he is right. The pale, tiny wavelets rise and turn to a dark, angry colour; white horses ride abroad; upon the water's crest small flecks of foam are dancing gaily. Our boat begins to rock a little, and Carrie glances at James.

"Tis on'y the ups an' downs o' life, ma'am," says he, cheerfully—"jist like the little babies in the cradle. See how young *they* begin their throubles, the crathurs."

We conclude by this that he believes

infants have a rooted objection to being rocked, in which opinion he is as likely to be right as wrong, as nobody knows anything about it, though each one we meet must be a high authority if only he could remember. And now comes down the rain in gleaming torrents—not hard or pelting, but with a soft, passionate vehemence. Through it the clouds on Tomies shine sullenly, and as though they were great fumes of smoke rising from dense, unfathomable depths. They seem to wrap the mountain and wind it in a trembling but deadly embrace. Just through this cloudy mist, one can see here and there, a peak or hilly outline, struggling as it were for freedom.

"It is like a scene from Dante's 'Inferno,'" says Muriel, in a low tone. "Poor Doré! could he but have seen this!"

The water fowl are scudding along the edges of the lake. The short, high waves are dashing themselves against our boat. Darkness has fallen upon us. Past the wave-worn stones of Stag and Burnt Islands we go, seeing little now but the gaunt outlines of their rocky sides as we steal by them. All are silent except James, who every now and then gives way to a monotonous murmur.

"She was a good boat, she was," repeats he, in a coaxing tone, over and over again.

Catching Carrie's look of large amazement, he condescends to explain this remarkable utterance.

"Sure, ye know, she wouldn't carry us so quick through this weather, ma'am, if we didn't give her the good word now an'

thin," he says earnestly. "An' 'tis a good-hearted lass she is at all times, an' many's the day she's brought me safe and sound to land whin another one's gone to the bottom."

"There isn't any *real* danger, is there?" asks Carrie, with all the calm bravery of one who feels her last hour is close at hand, yet shrinks not.

"Arrah! not at all, ma'am, not a taste of it," says James. "Ye should see the storms we have here sometimes, an' thin ye'd know the differ betwixt them an' a little squaleen like this."

"Why, the rain is over!" says Muriel, throwing back the covering from her head, and glancing upward at the sky.

Carrie, who is distinctly disappointed that danger is far from us, follows her example.

Through the last flying drops of rain and the sighing wind a strange, uncertain light is struggling to assert itself. It is the Queen of Night herself that now breaks forth upon our startled vision, glad, solemn, and triumphant.

"How like a queen comes forth the lovely moon
From the slow-opening curtains of the clouds,
Walking in beauty to her midnight throne!
The stars are veiled in light;
All height, depth, wildness, grandeur, gloom below,
Touch'd by thy smile, lone moon, in one wild splendour glow."

The sullen mist has cleared away. Tomies again stands out bold and grand against the starry sky; upon its topmost heights great patches of moonlight are falling. Across the lake a pathway as of molten silver is laid down that seems to lead from us to Ross Island. The tall fir-trees and swaying beeches

and drooping arbutus on all the islands and on the mountain slopes are tinged with the rays of heaven. Even the waves, that are still dancing roughly, have their angry crests fringed with the pale fire. The lake, the hills, the starry sky, all combine to create a picture rich in beauty.

The men have rested for a moment to gaze at this unexpected coming of the moon, — that "goddess excellently bright."

"I think, ma'am," says James, with slow emphasis, "that the Almighty must have taken great credit to Himself when he had finished this place."

The words of the simple boatman, coming so clearly from his heart, seem to us worthy of all admiration, and fill Carrie's appreciative soul with joy. Miss Kingsley bends

upon him so sweet a smile that Brooke is devoured with envy, and even Jones turns in his mackintosh with a dreary groan. Alas! if such good things be going, why, *why* is an unimportant boatman to be the recipient of them?

"What a beautiful night it is!" says Brooke, in an insufferably dull tone.

This common-place remark is rather too much for us, who have our senses saturated with the unutterable ecstasy that thrills through the air, rising from the blended charms of mountain, lake, and sky. In our exalted mood his trite remark is received as a deliberate insult. If he had hoped by it to bring Miss Kingsley's lovely eyes upon him he more than succeeds, because he brings upon him, too, a swift glance from her of withering contempt. No, it is *not* Brooke!

I feel I shall yet triumph over Carrie, and half make up my mind what wedding-present I shall make Jones.

He (Jones) is plainly enchanted with Brooke's attempt at pleasing converse.

"Go it, Brooke!" he chuckles, in a hoarse croak that ends in a fit of sneezing.

Brooke disdains to hear him. Not yet warned by the marked silence that met his last effort, he now strives afresh to make himself heard.

"What a glorious moon!" he says, throwing up his chin, and regarding the shining planet with quite a kindly admiration. "There are few things that strike one as being so thoroughly replete with beauty as a full moon. She is, indeed, a goddess supremely regal in her stateliness."

And then he begins to spout,—

"'Queen and huntress, chaste and fair!'"

He makes his worn-out quotation with a gentlemanly, well-bred air, full of calm sentiment, and looks round for our admiring sympathy.

"Who chased her?" ask I, anxiously, in the innocence of my heart.

I get no reply. A stern glance from Carrie, and a stony silence on the part of the others, compel me to believe I have been —unintentionally—indiscreet. As usual, I am misunderstood. One cannot always remember that those Greek gods and goddesses had histories that—that "really *are*, you know." And yet, perhaps, I am not so wholly misunderstood as I imagined. There is a prolonged but suppressed sound, and a mysteri-

ous shaking, beneath the mackintosh that attracts my attention. Has Jones been suddenly attacked by an acute fit of ague? or is it—

And now we have passed the honeycombed rocks, and those they have named the London Press, and have left Innisfallen, too, behind us. The waves are dashing against the Prison as we pass it, trying in vain to conquer its solidity. The men bend to their oars. Straight upon the moonlit watery path we go, until at last we touch land, and soon find ourselves within the hall of the hotel.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT occurs to me, as we sit at our rather late dinner, that Miss Kingsley's appearance to-night is more than ordinarily festive. It is something in her gown, I think (which is, as usual, white), or else in her broad, soft sash, which is of an æsthetic green, — olive-green, — which fact I evolve from Carrie. She has a tiny string of pearls round her neck, and a little sweet-scented rose in her hair. Jones, who, though still hoarse, is well to the front,

cannot take his eyes off her, and Brooke grows drowsy with admiration.

Then dinner comes to an end, and I am sitting outside the hall-door, enjoying a well-earned cigar after the trying events of the day, when a most complicated note from Carrie is handed to me by the bull-terrier.

I am to go to her *directly!* She awaits me in my dressing-room. It is all very abominable and distressing. I am not to stay to finish my *odious* cigar, but to *hasten* to her.

What on earth is the matter now? I fling away the unoffending weed and race at the top of my speed to my dressing-room, expecting to behold Carrie *in extremis.*

She is, however, walking briskly up and

down the room, looking tearful, but in no wise at the last gasp.

"Oh, it is dreadful!" she says. "He came to me just now as white as a ghost, and almost in tears. He said *dreadful* things. And what could I say? I'm afraid she likes the other best."

"So am I."

(She is beginning evidently to agree with my Jones theory.)

"I never saw anything so forlorn as he looked. He—he looked positively *suicidal!*" she says, hysterically. "I shouldn't wonder at *anything* he might do."

"He always looks like an escaped lunatic," I remark. "Probably he *will* do something worthy of note in the years to come."

"He'll do it now!" says Carrie, with

nervous solemnity. "He threatened as much. He said things had come to a crisis, and that matters should be decided now 'at once and for all.' It didn't seem to me at the moment that I understood what he meant, but I believe he is going to challenge his rival. There will be a duel. Good heavens! what is to be done?"

"What, indeed?" say I.

"Oh, what an answer to make to me when I feel half distracted!" says Carrie, with wild reproach. "Can't you suggest something? Oh, what a man to marry?"

Here she falls a-weeping. I confess with terrible self-contempt that even now, when marriage is an old tale with me, Carrie's tears fill me with despair.

"Don't do that!" I cry. "*Don't* you know!—there isn't a bit of good to be got

out of tears? There isn't indeed, if you will only look at it in the right light."

"I asked him," says Carrie, still sobbing, "if she had ever given him cause to hope. But he said 'yes' and 'no' so often and so indiscriminately that I couldn't make out what he meant. But how she could prefer the other is more than I can explain."

"Well, I don't know," I say, slowly, thinking of Jones's good humour (when away from Brooke), which ought in a measure to make up for the build of his nose. "He might perhaps be regarded by some girls in a more favourable light than the other; but yet there is something, as you suggest, about—"

"Yes; isn't there?" says Carrie, with enthusiasm. "I, for my part, should not dream of comparing them."

"Neither should I," with emphasis, feeling she is growing hard on poor Jones. "One is a consummate puppy, the other—"

"Just so," says Carrie, hastily, with a view, as I imagine, to shutting me up. "Oh, if you had seen his face!"

"I don't want to see it," I remark, sulkily. "I've seen considerably too much of it. It is as ill-favoured a countenance as I know."

"There's a great deal of good in it."

"There's a great deal of *bad* in it."

"I don't agree with you at all. And it is impossible, George, to know on what side you really are: you seem to chop and change with every wind."

"The whole thing is not worth one unkind word from you to me, or *vice versa*," I remark, calmly. "The question is about

Miss Kingsley. We have failed to fathom her meaning, though the intentions of these most mistaken young men are only too clear to us. And, after all, I suppose it does make a difference to a girl whether a man is tall or short."

"Of course; yet it can't be everything, you know."

"Nevertheless, height counts."

"No, it doesn't," says she, vehemently.

Now, I am at the very least six feet one in height, and always up to this believed myself the dearer to Carrie because of my many inches. I am therefore very naturally offended by this remark. It is, besides, a most gratuitous insult, as Brooke is of a goodly height himself, and therefore her pretended indifference to the advantages to be gained by his dignified stature over the some-

what innumerous inches of Jones is put forward merely for my annoyance.

"If you mean to tell me you honestly believe," I begin, hotly, "that a girl would prefer as a lover a little, fat, squat man, I—"

"Oh, George! And I thought Mr Jones was your friend!"

"So he is. But there's justice in all things, and I wonder you aren't ashamed to mention Jones's name when you are supporting *that fellow* against him."

"What fellow?"

"Brooke."

"Mr Brooke! NONSENSE!" says Carrie. "I can't bear him. He is" — with airy fickleness — "quite the most insupportable young man I ever met in my life. He is quite too much for anybody, with his absurd airs and graces; but Mr Jones—"

"You mean to tell me that all this time you have been advocating the cause of *Jones?*" I ask, with a little gasp of intense surprise.

"Of course I have. Poor fellow! he is in quite a dreadful state."

"I should have thought his cold bath might have damped his ardour," say I, grimly.

"It hasn't then; he seems terribly in earnest. He left me," says Carrie, growing terrified again, "with the declared determination that the night should not pass without his obtaining satisfaction. Oh, George, when men talk of 'satisfaction' they always mean bullets, don't they, now?"

"Do they?" say I.

"You needn't think to hide it from me,"

says Carrie, tearfully. "I can see through you quite plainly. Like myself, you dread the worst."

"Well, let us go down stairs and face it," I return.

We go down stairs. In the drawing-room we find Muriel alone; all the other occupants of the hotel seem to be—well, anywhere you like but here. As we open the door, she looks up with a quick, expectant glance and a swift rush of colour, that dies away as her eyes encounter ours. Was it Jones, was it Brooke, she was expecting? At all events, it is plain to us that the fact that it is only we is a disappointment to her.

We have hardly time to speculate on this fact, when the door is once more thrown rudely open, and in come—or rather *rush*

—Jones and Brooke. With one accord they dash up the room and toward Miss Kingsley. Fell determination shines within their eyes, so does raging anger. Are they going to precipitate themselves upon her bodily, and rend her limb from limb, as a means of ending, once and for all, the mad rivalry between them? Is this "the worst" of which Carrie spoke just now?

An instant later I am convinced that her annihilation is not so much their object as a settled determination to make her come to the point and decide between them.

> "They come, they come, with their flashing eyes,
> And their cheek of passion's hue?"

And very unlimited cheek, too, as it seems to me. An absorbing fear that the other may speak before him fills the breast of each. At last they have reached her.

"Miss Kingsley!" says Brooke, in a tone suggestive of hard running.

"Miss Kingsley!" pants Jones in a tone suggestive of apoplexy.

Evidently the supreme moment has come.

But how is it with Miss Kingsley now in this important hour, when the last act of the drama is being played? What is she looking at down there at the lower end of the room, where the lamplight scarcely penetrates? Her glance has travelled past the belligerents —it is indeed even possible that she does not see them—to something that is standing in the door-way. This something presently resolves itself into a tall young man clad in light tweed. With a little impassioned gesture she waves aside the breathless Jones and Brooke, and advances toward this apparition. Oh, the light that springs into her lovely

eyes as she does this, the glad sweetness of her lips!

"*You*, Cyril!" she says, and no more; but her hands are now imprisoned within his, and there is a ring in her voice that to us is new,—such a soft, tender, lingering delight is in it. As for the tall young man, he seems beyond speech, and simply stands staring at her, in a fashion suggestive of the idea that if cannibalism were not now considered vulgar he would willingly devour her.

Then sanity is restored to them.

"Carrie," she says, turning prettily towards us, though with one hand still considerately left to the tall young man, who, I am convinced, could never have got on without it, —"Carrie, let me introduce to you Cyril—Captain Fitzgerald."

Before she had finished this small speech

her happy eyes have again returned to her lover? *Her lover!* What lover? Which lover? We seem all in a maze; we mutter something that afterwards we *hope* was polite, and Carrie finds her hand is grasped in a very friendly and fleshy manner by the apparition. When I say "we," you will understand that I allude solely to myself and Carrie, as I am too much afraid of them to be able to look at either Jones or Brooke, to discover how they are bearing up under this astounding surprise.

"This, Cyril, is one of my very dearest friends," says Muriel, indicating Carrie. "And this is another," with a smile at me,—"Mr Desmond, Captain Fitzgerald."

It is clear that any friend of this girl's must at once be regarded with affection by the tall young man. He wrings my hand

warmly, and gives me as long and as kindly a glance as he can spare from Muriel. Indeed, it would be impossible for the very densest person not to see how it is between him and her. A shudder passes over me when I think of Brooke and Jones. Is there not danger in the deadly silence that has fallen upon them? Is it paralysis, or a tigerish gathering of themselves together for a spring?

"Now, I'm glad we are all friends," says Muriel, with the sweetest grace. There is something about her beauty at this moment that might well be termed exquisite. Then she turns again to him, and says, with an impulsiveness I could hardly have believed possible in the calm girl of the past few days, "What a *time* it has been? I thought you would *never* come!"

"I thought so too," says he, simply.

"When was it we were last together? It seems an eternity ago. This was certainly the longest month I ever put in in my life."

"But it is over now," says she, and large tears rise in her eyes.

They are speaking quite openly, quite naturally to each other. We are forgotten. It is plain to us that in all the world just now there is only she for him, and he for her.

But where are Jones and Brooke? Stealthily I turn a reluctant eye upon them. They are standing huddled together in a corner, as it were, gaping with lack-lustre eyes upon their undoer. All their fire has died out of them; they are as crushed, as forlorn as a heap of ashes. They look ready to slink away and hide their discomfiture in some dark spot, but even this poor consolation

is denied them; they are bound to face publicity.

"These are two other friends of mine," says Muriel, turning eagerly to them in her new happiness, lest they should deem themselves forgotten. Alas! could she but know it, that is all their desire. "They have been kinder to me than I can say." Then she introduces them to the fortunate, smiling Cyril, and the wretched young men have to come forward and make him a gracious bow, while she looks on with quite a new friendly smile for them upon her lips. "If—if I had been their sister," she says, with a soft touch of effusive gratitude, "they could not have shown me greater attention."

She positively beams upon them. It is all too much for the poor youths. In-

stinctively in their anguish they turn to each other. In this terrible moment all the fresh wrongs are forgiven, nothing is remembered but the good old days when they were school-boys together, and those later days when they were chums at Cambridge. They move a little closer to each other. Was it for this false fair one they surrendered a life-long friendship? A little nearer still they draw, and Brooke (who is by far the limpest of the two, and therefore the one upon whom grief—that is, chagrin — has taken the strongest hold) turns to Jones, and gazes on him with a dreary eye, out of which all rancour has flown.

With such an eye does Jones return his glance, and then Brooke totters forward. He slips his hand within Jones's arm;

there is a momentary hesitation, and then Jones accepts the situation, the arm, and the unspoken apology, and with faltering footsteps takes his recovered friend and himself out of the room.

CHAPTER IX.

"WELL, I *was* amazed, weren't you?" says Carrie, when we are, a little later on, in our own room. "After all, you know, the very silliest person could have seen she didn't mean to have anything to do with those two foolish young men."

"*You* saw it quite plainly," say I, unable to restrain a passing remembrance of her spoken conviction that Brooke would be the man.

"So did you," retaliates she, with a steady glance that at once reduces me to order. "You were quite certain she wouldn't *look* at Mr Jones. I think I have heard you say so a thousand times."

"Oh, make it half-a-dozen!" say I, meekly. "I can't encourage exaggeration, even when it is on my side."

Then something strikes us both, and we laugh aloud.

"*Didn't* she take us in?" says Carrie, in a whisper. "Well, after all, there is comfort in the thought that we were *both* sold. I should never have forgiven you if I had been the only one so utterly at fault."

"I think I like her captain," say I. "There was something honest in the grasp of his hand. And isn't she in love with him though? Did you mark her eyes?"

"It was all like a charming little scene out of something," says Carrie amiably, "everything seemed to fit in so nicely. Yes, he is very handsome, and somehow suits her. And, in spite of those melancholy young men, what a lovely time we have had during these last few days!"

"What a pity we are bound to leave to-morrow!"

"It can't be helped, and, at all events, we must take Muriel back to her aunt."

"Shall we go by the early or the mid-day train?"

"If we could be only sure," says Carrie, in a disturbed whisper, "when *they* are going. I wouldn't meet them again for anything you could offer. How shall we find out their movements?"

At this moment there is a tramping noise

in the corridor outside, and a stifled voice, that we yet know belong to Brooke, is heard calling wildly for a waiter. We hold our breaths to listen, and presently the bull-terrier appears upon the scene outside.

"Mr Jones and I leave by the earliest train," says Brooke, in a stern tone. "You understand, the VERY earliest,—at cockcrow, if possible. We—we have a most important reason for leaving as soon as we possibly can."

"All right, sir; I'll see to it," says the bull-terrier, with an amount of sympathy in his voice that convinces us he knows all about it.

It would be a gigantic intellect indeed that succeeded in hiding its private affairs from the ken of a servant.

"That's all right," says Carrie, in a relieved tone. "Then *we* go by the mid-

day train, which is of course much more convenient. And naturally Muriel will like to get one little row upon the lake with her Cyril."

"*Le roi est mort, vive le roi!*" I can see at once that, so far as Carrie is concerned, Jones and Brooke and their lovers'-woes are already forgotten, and that the tall young man in grey is the one important thing at present. As I myself feel a sneaking kindness for this tall young man, I forbear to sneer.

And so to sleep. All through my dreams are tinged with living memories of glowing beauty,—of mountains red with the fires of dying sunsets; of placid lakes asleep within the arms of a pale silver moon; of tall, dark firs and drooping, snowy blossoms; and a very harmony of

echoes, resounding from fairy glen to wild, bare rock and back again, until the distance swallows them and they are lost. In vain I seem to search for them, striving with this and that monster imprisoned in the strange fastnesses of the majestic mountains, until my dreams become a misery. Surely the faces of two of these Titans are known to me. That lean, long nose, that sallow cheek,—once seen never to be forgotten,—surely they belong to Brooke disembodied, more fearsome than he was, but still Brooke. And that rotund form, that fleshy face? 'Tis Jones, 'tis he himself! In vain I flee. They compass me on every side. Frantically I rush forward and fling myself headlong into space.

There is a roar of many waters in my ears, a flash of myriad diamonds in my

eyes, and swiftly I find myself, with a strange sense of being carried onward with an unearthly rapidity of motion, immersed in the magnificent torrent of the Tore Cascade. From rock to rock I bound, past glowing greens and trailing crimsons, hurrying ever and ever—*whither?*

"I have borne a good deal, George, but this is quite too much. Really, one had better be up and dressed, though tired to death, than listening to such nonsense. For all the sleep I can get, I might just as well never have gone to bed."

It is Carrie's voice. Oh, blessed sound! did I ever do the sweetness of it justice? With its coming cascade, demons, *all!* vanish into thin air.

"You have saved me!" I cry, with a sigh of rapturous relief.

"I am sure I am very glad of it," says Carrie, dryly. "I wish I had done it an hour ago. Perhaps, as a reward for my valour, you will now give up your shouts and groans, and permit me to close my eyes for a few minutes."

I graciously accord her the permission demanded, and this time lose myself in a dreamless slumber.

Next day sees us speeding as fast as an uncommonly slow train can take us away from the land of beauty in which we have been sojourning. A little sad feeling has fallen upon Carrie and me. As for our companions, they are lost to all sentiment save one, and have ceased for the present to believe in any such foolish thing as regret.

With longing eyes we catch our last

glimpse of wooded Torc, and watch the watch the sunbeams playing upon Mangerton until it too fades out of sight. And now even the Paps are gone from us, and another land—one "flat, stale, and unprofitable"—seems to have opened on our view. As we reach Mallow, it is to us as though only a lovely memory is all we can call our own.

The change of trains here still further helps to break the link that binds us to the South. We breathe a tender sigh, and cast one longing glance to where fair Kerry lies. Involuntarily we kiss our hands to it, and so farewell to thee, Killarney!

THE END.

COLSTON AND COMPANY, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.



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